ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES



SCOTTISH TRADITION.

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ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES;

OR, THE

OUTLAWS OF BARRA.

A SCOTTISH TRADITION.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

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ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES.

CHAPTER I.



The travellers, on landing at Carrickfergus, concluding themselves safe from danger, tarried a few days to repose from their fatigue; Ambrosine purchasing a change of apparel, and engaging a female attendant. Cheerful without levity, and informed without affectation, she became daily more estimable; though the companions of St. Clair, true to the call of honour, considered her only as a beloved sister, while he himself, now accustomed to her society, knew no hap-

piness but what depended on her: yet the reflection of his unhappy situation made him struggle against his passion, which was, however, too visible to be overlooked; for, though his words were restrained, his eyes, his actions, both declared it, and the flattering conviction was as certain as the heart of Ambrosine could wish.

One day, Monteith being alone with her, she said—"St. Clair, though our actions be pure as those of angels, what thinkest thou the world will say of a damsel of my age, wandering by land, and voyaging by sea, with such a set of bold fellows as thee and thy comrades?"

"Ambrosine," replied he, "do not awaken unpleasant reflections; thy honour is dearer to me than my life, and never will I suffer it to be sullied by the breath of slander."

"Then wilt thou need as many arms

as

as the giant Briareus, and as many lives as he had heads, yet find them all too few; besides, thinkest thou that the retailers of scandal will choose, in this case, to display their talents before thee? No; I must expiate this mad freak in a convent: where thinkest thou I shall be best placed—in England, Ireland, or Scotland?"

"Alas! I shudder at the bare thought of parting from you; but it must be: choose where you will, I will see you safe, and then what farther business hath Monteith with life?"

The depression with which he spoke sunk to the heart of Ambrosine.—"Monteith," said she, turning from him to conceal the burning crimson that covered her face and bosom, "dost thou love me?"

"Love thee!" repeated he, all caution banished by the question; "no, the word is too poor, and bears no

similitude to my feelings; thou art dearer to me than light or life: I adore thee!"

"Then *must* I go to a convent?"

"Alas! I know not. I am but man. Spare me, beloved Ambrosine, from a temptation which is so hard to resist."

"Monteith," said she, raising her soft blue eyes to his, "have ye no room for me to dwell at Barra?"

"Angelic tempter!" exclaimed he, clasping her waist with his arm, "thou dwellest in my heart, and never shall it know another love. But, to take thee to Barra—impossible! thee, to waste thy youth and beauty amidst the savage mountains of the Hebrides!"

"There is no criterion for taste," answered she.—"But enough; I will away to the first convent; I have stepped over the boundaries prescribed my sex, and thou lovest me not."

"Cruel and unjust accusation! Nay, thou

thou knowest otherwise; and that, did I possess a diadem, it could only gain value by being shared with thee."

"Then pride is stronger than love in thy heart. Remember, Monteith, that love had conquered pride in mine, or I had never come to Barra, or claimed thy protection at Roskelyn."

"Generous maid! never can it be forgotten. Oh, Ambrosine! wherever thou goest, thou wilt ever be my daily thoughts and my nightly dreams; in the singing of birds I shall recognise the notes of thy sweet voice, but never shall I see thy counterpart, unless it be in a better and a happier world."

"That I love you, Monteith, I, alas! have given proofs beyond all denial; and we but court pain to prolong a separation which inevitably must take place. In the vicinity of Belfast there is a convent of Benedictine sisters; and thither will I with to-morrow's dawn."

"Hateful thought! must we so soon part?"

"You said so," answered she.

"Dearest maid, cruel in your kindness! the effort must be yours—I can never make it."

"Nay then, how should I, that am a weak woman? But my mind is fixed, and shall remain firm to its purpose."

De Bourg and Ross entering, prevented more discourse. Monteith appeared out of spirits during the evening, and Ambrosine retired early to rest.

In the morning they were but just assembled, when Ambrosine entered, accoutred for a journey.—"Good day," said she, addressing them; "I go to Belfast: ye are not old, but ye are dear friends: prolong not, I pray ye, the taking leave, for, though *ye* may bear it like heroes, *I* shall feel it like a woman."

They all crowded round her; one asking the reason of such sudden haste;

another

another entreating her to defer her intention: a third praying a respite of a day: while De Bourg, pressing her hand respectfully to his lips, at once dropped a tear on it, and muttered a curse on folly and false honour.

Ross and Monteith stood apart. Advancing towards the first, Ambrosine said—"Accept at once, sir James, my thanks and farewell; think of me as a sister, and as kind brothers will I remember all at the fortress."

Ross raised her hand to his lips in silent emotion.

"And now, Monteith," said she, with assumed firmness, "farewell: let not, I conjure you, your impetuous valour lead you into dangers: your enemies may, indeed, a while triumph, but the sun of prosperity will again shine upon St. Clair." As she concluded, her voice was less articulate, and a sickly paleness overspread her transparent complexion.

"Oh, Ambrosine!" exclaimed Monteith, clasping her in his arms, "beloved of my soul, it is impossible; I can sooner yield my life; thou makest me a villain; thou must never leave me. Say, angel that thou art, canst thou condescend to be the wife of a banished man?"

Ambrosine made no reply, but withdrew herself from his arms; and, with her face dyed with blushes, left the apartment.

Monteith instantly followed her.—"Ambrosine," said he, "I dare not reflect; I, that would willingly make thee empress of the whole world, have nothing to offer thee but a heart, and that bleeding with a thousand wrongs."

Ambrosine's eyes were bathed in tears; but, dispersing them, with a smile she replied—"I will endeavour to heal them, Monteith."

Monteith kissed off a tear that hung on her cheek, and, while clasped to his

heart,

heart, he pressed her to let the rites of the holy church immediately make them one.

Conscious of the impropriety of her situation, she complied; and at an early hour the ensuing morning, they were united in a small chapel at Carrickfergus, her female attendant, and their mutual friends, being present.

The rites ended, Monteith embraced his beauteous bride.—Though James of Scotland," said he, "hath driven me forth an outlaw, at this moment I am richer far than he, for Heaven hath given me an angel: and, when I forfeit my trust, may all the sorrows I have encountered be redoubled upon my head for ever!"

Aware of the uneasiness their companions at Barra must suffer on their account, they resolved to hasten thither as speedily as possible. Ambrosine voyaging with them with the utmost cheer-

fulness; in the company of Monteith regardless of every other object in the creation, and he, in her gentle converse, forgetting he was a banished man.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.



During their voyage, St. Clair had wished to inform Ambrosine of the capture of the heir of Roskelyn, but a promise the residents of the fortress had unanimously made, not to disclose the secret without the concurrence of each other, restrained him; yet, to prevent her being surprised by the sight of a child at her arrival, he one day before his companions said—"Pardon me, dear Ambrosine, but I have used one deception towards you; I have a young boy at Barra, for whom I must bespeak your affection."

"Indeed!" replied she, somewhat surprised; but, smiling, she added—"Then

'tis part of my duty, I suppose, to love him; Monteith is a man of honour, and has doubtless done *his* by the mother."

"His mother is far from hence, and never more do I wish to behold her."

"Doth she need pecuniary assistance?" said Ambrosine.

"No; she revels with the richest dames of the south. I am bound by promise to my companions not to be more explicit, but, on my arrival, they will doubtless set me free: for, with one heart, Ambrosine, we must have but one mind."

On their arrival at Barra they were received with transport, but particularly Ambrosine, whom they all regarded as the instrument of their friend's happiness and future prosperity.

Scarcely were the travellers seated, and refreshment placed before them, when the little sturdy Randolph ran in; and, seeing Monteith, climbed upon his

knees,

knees, and saluted him with the name of father. Monteith tenderly kissed him, saying—"Thou comest unexpectedly. I wished first," added he, looking at his companions "to have entered into some explanation with Ambrosine." As he spoke, he placed the young Randolph on her knee, but was astonished to see her pale, and scarcely able to support herself upon her seat.

"Ambrosine," cried he, in a voice of alarm, "why thus disordered? The sight of the infant surely could not cause it? Thou knowest I told thee——"

"Monteith," said she, hastily interrupting him, "art thou a man of honour?"

"Have I lived to hear thee doubt it?" answered he.

"Then whence comes it this boy is here? said she, fixing her eyes strongly upon him."

"That is what I wished to explain to

thee,

thee, but was not at liberty without the consent of my companions."

"Monteith," said she in a solemn voice, "when I first loved thee, it was not for thy person, for then, in truth, I had never seen thee; but when my father spoke of thy unmerited persecutions, and the sorrows that had attended thee, even from thy infancy, I involuntarily wept, and knew not that I was nourishing the first seeds of love. When he spoke of thy courage and noble daring, my heart swelled, and I wished thee success in all thy undertakings; and when he deplored the impetuosity of thy temper, which led thee into youthful errors, I endeavoured to palliate and excuse them."

Monteith took her hand, and attempted to reply, but she prevented him by saying—"Suffer me to conclude; I will then listen with the obedience I owe thee. It was no light passion that could

influence

influence me to act as I have done to gain thy heart and hand. No, Monteith, it is an affection interwoven with my very existence; and when I no longer *dare* love thee, I must cease to live. Nay, interrupt me not; let them banish thee to the frozen shores of Lapland, or to the scorching climes of India, thither will Ambrosine attend thee, in poverty, sickness, or unmerited disgrace: but if *real* dishonour comes, Ambrosine dies, and Monteith is again free."

The whole party viewed her with admiration. Monteith with a sentiment of respect that increased his affection.

"My beloved," said he, "you suspect me of some unworthy act, yet explain it not."

"How comes it then," replied she, "that I find the heir of Roskelyn in the isle of Barra?"

"Know ye the boy?" said Monteith.

"I do; even without the testimony

of

of his arm, which, being covered, I have not yet seen. When in the castle of Roskelyn, he was my favourite companion, and, by his fondness for me, appeared to consider me as more nearly allied to him than his mother."

"The boy had judgment," said Monteith; "our secret discovered, my companions will explain the whole, and endeavour to recover your good opinion."

The outlaws then related the means by which Montrose had fallen into their hands; the dissatisfaction of Monteith on the occasion; the dying request of Randolph M'Gregor, and his bequest. —"So far for the present, lady," said Hamilton; "now for the use we mean to make of him in future. In case of danger, think you not that this boy will always insure us good terms? though there is not a man here but what would rather die than do him the smallest injury. Bred among us, he will love us

all,

all, but more particularly Monteith, whom he is taught to consider as his father. Should we find it convenient to detain him to a more advanced age, he shall want no advantages that we can bestow, and, bred a brave fellow and an honest man, we shall have done *him* no injury, but have nurtured to Monteith a friend and son, out of the very nearest blood of his enemies."

Ambrosine made no reply.

"Had the grief of his parents been such as, I think, mine would have been for the loss of such a child," said St Clair, "no personal advantage could have obliged me to detain him; but on my inquiry, even when I first saw you, Ambrosine, you remarked his mother's want of feeling."

"It is too true," replied she; "I pray ye all pardon me: but, though I could wish this deed undone, I cannot but confess that good, rather than evil, may result

result from it. Come then, my poor boy," said she, taking him to her bosom, "thou shalt not want a mother. Canst thou call me mother?"

Randolph attempted to repeat the word; it was his first effort to articulate the name, and he failed; but, attracted by her smiles and kindness, he wound her golden tresses round his chubby fingers, and repeatedly kissed her lips and forehead.

The marriage of Monteith was not only celebrated in the island, but also in all those around; and if, heretofore, Ambrosine found herself an object of attention at Kintail and the court of Scotland, at Barra she was regarded as a queen, and revered as a goddess.

As the household economy is ever best conducted by a female, the fortress speedily began to assume a new aspect; the inhabited part was repaired, and Ambrosine dispatched a vassal to Kintail, ordering

ordering such furniture to be sent as made it commodious to them all. She also dispatched letters by the same conveyance to her vassals, desiring them to celebrate her marriage at her own expence, and to pay no sums but to her receipt, which by her father's will, as heiress, she was empowered to give, even independently of her husband. She also requested that, when William and Bridget should come to Kintail, they might repair by the first vessel to Barra.

The polished and active mind of Ambrosine, by insensible degrees, smoothed the roughness of the manners of her companions, who were all so respectfully attentive to her wishes, that she would sometimes say—"Surely there is not a woman in this country, nor I believe in any other, so happy as myself, for I have the best husband in the world, and

and a family of the most affectionate brothers."

When the weather was fair, she sailed with them among the islands, and partook of their amusements; in the dreary season she sung, or tuned her lute or harp, to beguile their hours. Their table, ever covered with plenty, was now arranged with skill; and beguiled by other pursuits, they lost the custom of drinking wine to excess, so that De Bourg was accustomed to declare, that he should dedicate his leisure hours to writing a treatise on temperance, and address it to the court of Scotland.

These pleasurable hours were broken upon, by an information which they received from William and Bridget, who reached them during the gloom of winter; it was, that the dowager and the lord Roskelyn, by repeated appeals, had at length succeeded in persuading the

the king to send a force sufficient to bring the whole of the inhabitants of the fortress to Edinburgh; a plan which was, however, to be deferred till the ensuing spring.

CHAP.

CHAPTER III.



MONTEITH and his companions laughed at the threatened danger.—"By Heaven," said he, "if they do come, we will dust their jackets, and send them back to James with a lesson, for which he will be the better as long as he lives. The only point in which I am vulnerable is my Ambrosine, who is not formed to encounter the inconveniences to which I, selfish man, have subjected her."

"Judge for thyself," replied she, gaily; "when I resolved on such a desperate action as passing my life with thee, I made up my mind to all the trifling alarms that I might possibly en-

counter.

counter. When I enervate thee with my pusillanimous fear, reproach me; but till then let me enjoy the reputation of courage."

"That thou art superior to all women, I have not to learn," replied Monteith; "but with a heart as gentle as that of the dove, however well thou mayest conceal it, thou wilt suffer much."

"Granted that it may be so," said she; "many a man hath done as much in battle, yet, by the assistance of a bold exterior, has passed for a hero: but, to shew you that I have reflected on this subject, I must inform you of a project I have devised, but leave it to your better judgment to adopt or decline it, as you think proper. William and his bride, who brought us the news of the intended attack, have warmly entreated to remain with us, and as I know the fidelity of both, I am willing to accept the

the offer. Let him be dispatched to Kintail, and from the armoury there load a vessel with whatever ye may think necessary, that the enemy may not find us so defenceless as they expect."

Though Monteith, some months back, had declined all arrangements for strengthening the fortress, he now, as well as his companions, was of a different opinion.—"I am turned miser," said he, "and think the casket that contains my treasure cannot be too strong to secure it."

From the first interview St. Clair had with the feigned Ambrose, she had engaged his esteem, and the discovery of De Bourg had almost, unknown to himself, given softer feelings to that sentiment; but when, adorned with her sex's charms, he saw her at the tournament, where with native dignity she answered the queen, by a bold refusal of the knight of Lorn, his heart became her willing

willing captive, though resolved to combat his passion, rather than to suffer her to share his disgrace. Her dependence on his honour, by claiming his protection to rescue her from the arts of the dowager of Roskelyn, and her subsequent conduct, when assured he truly loved her, rivetted his affection; and unable to combat it, he felt it was more easy to resign his life than to part from her. Marriage, which is said to calm the effervescence of passion, in St. Clair had a different effect; and the blooming Ambrose coming to relieve his wants at Barra, the lovely Ambrosine bearing away the prize of beauty at the court of Scotland, or the heiress of Kintail, gracing the noble hall of her ancestors, did not appear half so lovely in his eyes as the wife of the outlaw Monteith, clad in a simple Highland vest, a short petticoat, with her hair wantoning in the wind, as she climbed the mountains in

smooth paths, holding the young Randolph by the hand, or in rougher ways, with sportive playfulness threw him over her shoulder, and agile as the deer, ran till she gained the summit.

Since Randolph M'Gregor's death, St. Clair, as before observed, had become warmly attached to his young name-sake; but the affection Ambrosine testified for him, and his childish gratitude in returning it, speedily gave him redoubled interest in the heart of Monteith, so that he would sometimes say, as he caressed the rosy boy—"Thy mother, as she calls herself, hath communicated some of her fascinating power to thee, for, in spite of my resolution, and the invincible enmity I bear thy parents, I love thee, Randolph."

In the mean time the spring advanced, and the attack upon the isles with a strong

strong force was loudly rumoured abroad. Monteith and his companions, on their parts, neglected nothing to secure themselves from danger; William, and some of the friends of the outlaws, had brought from Kintail all they thought necessary for defence, while others had sailed among the isles, and made known the threatened danger to the inhabitants, who, almost to a man, had sworn to die in their cause rather than yield.

An event which in other circumstances would have given Monteith the most supreme delight, now alone overwhelmed him with grief; his idolized Ambrosine was within a few weeks of making him a father, and his fears on her account inspired sentiments that the king, and the whole power of Scotland, were not able to have created in his undaunted bosom. Herself, on the contrary, laughed, sung, and jested as usual, and by

 every

every means in her power, endeavoured to convince him that her mind was perfectly at ease, even respecting his own personal safety.

One morning in the month of June, centinels which they had kept for some time on the watch-tower gave them notice that four vessels, though at a considerable distance, were sailing towards the coast.

Not doubting but these contained their threatened foes, the inhabitants of the fortress arose hastily, and ringing the alarm-bell, speedily found themselves reinforced by numbers, each man pressing to be directed how he might be employed most effectually for the common benefit; some were immediately stationed to guard the fortress, others embarked in large sea-boats, on the opposite side of the island from the invaders, and hastened to Kismul, Vatersa, and the adjacent isles; from whence, before noon, they

returned

returned so deeply laden with men, that they appeared momentarily in danger of sinking. In the mean time, Monteith and his companions, completely armed, prepared to meet their enemies on that part of the coast towards which they appeared to direct their course.

Throughout the whole preparation, Monteith and his friends contemplated the behaviour of Ambrosine with wonder and mingled admiration; it was calm and dignified; and though her cheek glowed not with its usual red, no word to testify fear escaped her.

"Beloved of my soul," said Monteith, embracing her, "to what a state has participating my fate reduced thee?"

"To a state," replied she, "which I would not forego to be the mistress of empires. Fear not for me; I will away, and, as my first duty, entreat the protection of God for my husband and his brave friends; my second care shall be,

with the assistance of Bridget and my maidens, to prepare a feast befitting warriors weary with battle. Go, then," added she undauntedly, "go to conquest! my heart rises superior to the weakness of my sex; the Power who gave me such a husband as Monteith, will neither suffer me to be a widow, nor the eldest-born of my hopes to be a fatherless orphan."

"Heroic woman!" exclaimed Monteith, "thy words might make a coward brave: farewell—take heed to thyself: as for St. Clair's life, it hangs not on so poor a tenure as the power of James—he lives or dies with thee;" so saying, he turned from her, and, at the head of his friends, left the fortress. William was in the party of St. Clair; he was the son of an ancient vassal of the house of Roskelyn, who, well acquainted with the story of Monteith's oppressions, had aroused all the ardour of his son in the cause. From Ralph, the father of William, Ambro-

sine

sine had first learned which were the particular jewels of Monteith, and, by the advice of the old man, she had made him her messenger to the isle of Barra; nor had she cause to repent the trust, for, though warmly attached to Bridget, he had preserved the secret of his destination even from her. At the time of Ambrosine's flight, Ralph was at Stirling, attending the earl and countess, but on his return, readily consented to what Ambrosine requested, and seeing the young people united, gladly dismissed them, though privately, to Kintail.

William, anxious to deserve the kindness of the chief, pressed to be near him, while Bridget, unequal to imitate the conduct of her mistress, clung to his garments, wrung her hands, and shrieked aloud.—"Fie upon you, woman!" said Ambrosine, with more severity than she had ever before assumed; "call you that noise grief, or love for your hus-

band? Believe me 'tis neither, but mere selfishness, for love would teach you to compose, not to ruffle the spirits of a man at such a moment of danger. Come," added she, with more softness, "give me your hand; equal sufferers in this cause, we will condole and comfort each other." So saying, she led the weeping Bridget within the fortress, and commanded the gates to be securely closed.

Though she had supported the conflict nobly in sight of the warriors, for some time after her entrance her spirits sunk, and she remained in silent anguish; at length, shaking off the lethargy of sorrow, she retired to her apartment, whence, after remaining some time, she came forth, and with composure gave her attendants orders to prepare refreshment for their numerous friends. Taking young Randolph by the hand, she then mounted to the watch-tower, from

whence

whence she discovered that the vessels of the enemy had reached the coast on the one side, while on all the open parts of the island the sea-boats were busied in landing men they had brought from those adjacent.

Freed from all other observation, with young Randolph's arms clasped around her neck, Ambrosine gave free vent to the anguish that overpowered her, while he, charmed with the sight of the burnished weapons, glittering in the sun, alternately kissed off her tears, and clapping his hands in transport, exclaimed —"Let me go to them! let me go to them!"

In the mean time, Monteith having arranged his men and divided them into parties, each of which was commanded by one of his friends, found that his force amounted already to eight hundred, and that he might speedily expect many more; and though such a number, col-

lected in haste, could but be indifferently armed, yet each carried some weapon of defence, and on the whole made an appearance formidable to a power, that, however well armed and disciplined, did not equal them in number.

Monteith's little army took their station at some distance from the coast, until they had suffered a part of their enemies to land; then advancing towards them, he in a loud voice demanded the cause of their coming, and commanded them to desist from their disembarkation, under pain of an instant attack.

"We come," replied sir John Murray, who commanded the expedition, and saw with dismay the strength of his opposers, "in the name of the king of Scotland, to arrest, by his authority, the five outlaws, Monteith, De Bourg, Hamilton, Ross, and M'Gregor, and likewise whoever may be found abetting them in the fortress of Barra."

"Marry

"Marry then," interrupted De Bourg, "but you will then see some devilish warm work; but here we are—win us and wear us. By Jove! when ye lead us captives into Edinburgh but it will be glorious sport! James will hold his head a foot higher than he was wont."

Monteith, without noticing the answer of De Bourg, replied—"For the commands of the king of Scots, we feel no other sentiment than contempt; he knows his power in the court of Scotland, but he is yet to learn that of the men he hath unjustly banished, in this and the neighbouring isles. Repeated insults have not yet made us forget we are Scots; but let him beware how he proceeds too far, lest he force us to convince him that the Danes and Norwegians have not yet forgotten their ancient claim to these islands. So much for your king; but for the unhappy men engaged in this expedition, I feel pity;

they know not the danger of the attempt, and I cannot without sorrow find myself under the necessity of shedding the blood of my countrymen. We will however take no unfair advantage; my power, you see, is already strong, and as the wind drives the sand of the forest in banks, so, in like manner, will the rumour of this intrusion collect, and bring to our coast of Barra, men from every isle."

"Ye then refuse peremptorily to yield to the king's mandate?" said sir John Murray.

"We do," answered Monteith. "Of what crime are we accused? My companions can be of none; and for me, what is mine? You will say I went to the tournament when the king's commands restricted me to Barra; granted I did so," continued he, ironically; "let James himself remain a prisoner here as long as I have done, and I will forfeit

mine

mine honour if he wishes not for a change of situation. Again; I am charged with calling upon the agent Carnegie; 'tis true I did so; travelling is expensive; and from whence should a man defray his charges, but from his own? Now for my greatest misdeed; I loved a maid, and rescued her from tyrannic power, to wear her as a jewel next my heart, and which I would not forego for all the wealth of Scotland. Men and countrymen, you now know the full extent of my crimes, and find me ready to defend them. I have also warned you of the magnitude of your danger, from which, if you choose to desist, retire in safety to your vessels; but if ye resolve on the attempt to execute your king's commands, behold us ready; disembark the rest of your men—we fear ye not, but stand prepared to decide the contest."

The determined manner of Monteith, and

and the power which surrounded him, made sir John Murray pause; but the strict commands he had received left him no choice to act.—"Ye offer nobly, chief," replied he; "I would we were friends! but it cannot be—our lives would pay the forfeiture of our trust."

"'Tis well," said Monteith; "we allow ye yet half an hour; the mid-day sun shall behold the conflict." Monteith then broke off the conference, and, turning to his friends, arranged his men.

The Scots forces made a far more formidable appearance than those of Monteith; but the fire and ardour of the chief appeared to have communicated itself to his followers, and the given time being elapsed, he led them to the conflict.

"Follow me, brave islanders," said he; "we will shew these unhappy slaves of James's power what a body of friends and free men can effect. The sun is

now

now at its height, and if we drive them not back to their ships ere it sinks beneath the horizon, disgrace be ours! Come on! follow me! the word is, *victory or death*."

Thus speaking, followed by his men repeating his words, he rushed upon his foes with such impetuosity that they were immediately thrown into confusion, and with a quick eye singling out their chief—"Commander," said he, "your arm to mine—should either fall, the contest will be the sooner decided."

Thus challenged, Sir John Murray could not decline the combat; but the skill and strength of Monteith speedily brought him to the earth, and so severely wounded in the right arm, that he could not raise his sword. "Take your life," said St. Clair, "and let some of your men bear you to your vessel—we will no prisoners." Then rushing into the thickest of the fight, with the assist-

ance

ance of his friends, the discomfited Scots, deprived of their chief, speedily began to give way, and flying before the islanders, endeavoured to gain their ships. "They fly, they fly," exclaimed St. Clair, "like affrighted deer before the hunters! drive them to their ships, but remember mercy—lift your hands against none but those who resist; suffer them to take their wounded from the field: seek out our friends in the same sad state, and bear them to the fortress; our gentle hostess there will tend their sick bed."

"You bleed, St. Clair," said Ross; "are ye much hurt?"

"Pish, man! I have only a scratch in the hand: young Randolph's bone-knife would have made as deep a wound. I rejoice to see my friends safe; not any, I trust, are wounded to death."

The Scots lost no time in using the permission granted them, and taking up their

their wounded, they bore them to their ships, while the islanders, on their part, carried theirs, only ten in number, to the fortress.

CHAPTER IV.

WITH strained eyes and beating heart, Ambrosine remained on the tower until the parties met, when, unable to bear the sight, she concealed her fears in her chamber, where she remained until the cry of triumph reached the gates of the fortress, then, descending to the hall, she received the wounded, and giving them in charge to those who had guarded the tower, to bind their wounds, she herself went round, and recruited their spirits with wine, and such food as was proper for them to receive. She was thus employed, when St. Clair and his friends returned, and, her task completed, she flew to receive them.—" By Heaven," said

said he, snatching her to his breast, "had I never seen thee till this minute, thou hadst gained my heart! thou art formed for a soldier's wife."

"I thank Providence for the distinction; but say, how are our friends? Monteith, art thou safe? alas! there is blood upon thy sleeve!"

"Our friends, except those thou hast seen, thank Heaven, are well; for myself, I was never better; what has passed was mere boy's play. On the fall of their leader, sir John Murray, they fled to their vessels, like hunted deer to the covert."

"Alas!" replied she, "is he slain?"

"No, my best love, merely wounded in the arm; but come—such food as we have let us share with our friends."

"Pardon my forgetfulness, but all is ready within; both men and maidens act as cooks; the ovens and pots of the fortress are filled with our stores."

"I thank

"I thank your care; our friends shall refresh themselves with what we have now; to-morrow some beasts shall be slaughtered to make up the deficiency."

The whole party kept watch during the night; and in the morning, by early dawn, they had the satisfaction to see their enemies at a considerable distance from the coast.

As the news spread of the attack upon the residents of Barra, during that day the more distant islanders continued to pour in; these were also regaled, at nearly the expence of the whole of their stock, and, early the second morning after the contest they took leave of the outlaws, swearing to live or die in their defence.

The news of the defeat of the king's forces speedily reached the court, to the great vexation of the sovereign, and many others; and sir John Murray, though

though still very weak and lame in the arm, was ordered before the council, to give an account of the expedition, which, terminating according to the former opinion of sir Alexander Livingstone, that politician was perhaps not displeased to find his disregarded advice thus verified.

"My liege," said sir John Murray, "without having beheld the conflict, you can form no idea of such desperate enemies. Strong as lions, and ferocious as tigers, they rushed upon us on every side, their fearful yells spreading dread into the heart, and confusion into the head, of every Scottish soldier. Undisciplined, and strangely accoutred, their weapons were as various as their features; some carried swords, others bows, some spears and pikes, others clubs or battle-axes, and where those failed, bars of iron of different lengths, which, tremendous to behold, levelled all that opposed

them.

them. Swords were our only defence, for our bows were useless, as they attacked us so closely, that they had no room to act. To the chief, Monteith, the islanders look up with reverence, and the most enthusiastic veneration; for, though formed both by person and education to grace the higher ranks of life, he accommodates himself to their manners, and, by a gracious though dignified familiarity, commands at once both their love and obedience."

"What loss of men have ye sustained?" said the king.

"An hundred wounded, and thirty slain; and veracity obliges me to declare, that but for the lenity of the victors, our loss had been trebled, for, wounded and disarmed by the chief, he might, had he so chosen, have slain me. I must also do the same justice to the rest of the outlaws, for, following the example of their leader, during the whole conflict, they

they cried aloud—'Spare all that resist not! drive them to their vessels!'"

"The varlets!" said the king. "Who will volunteer in this cause? I will unkennel the foxes, if it cost me a thousand men! What say you sir James Stuart? will you take a command in the next expedition?"

"Excuse me, my liege—in every other cause my life is yours; but I cannot unsheath my sword against Monteith; whom I grieve to see languish under your grace's displeasure."

"Marry, I expected not this," said the king; "the traitors shall not however escape. The fortune of Monteith was, on their outlawry, alone confiscated; see now that those of his companions be the same, as also that of the heiress of Kintail; Livingstone, observe that this be done."

"My liege," replied Livingstone, "pardon me; but have you considered the

the consequence of this command when executed? We have already witnessed the power of Monteith: in this cause the clans of Ross, Hamilton, M'Gregor, and Kintail, will combine with those that have already joined them, and, woe to our country! ravage us with civil wars; and calling our forces to the North to oppose this formidable league, leave the South an open prey to the English, who, notwithstanding the present peace, will hardly fail to seize so favourable an opportunity to take advantage of our intestine broils."

Sir James Stuart and several other nobles joining their opinion with Livingstone's, the council broke up, leaving the business undecided.

In a private conversation which Livingstone afterwards had with the king, he so clearly pointed out the danger of confiscating the wealth of the outlaws, that the plan was resigned, that of St. Clair

Clair excepted, which remained in its former state.

The news of what had passed at Barra gave additional bitterness to the heart of the earl of Roskelyn, and to that of his haughty countess. With the latter, the fascinations of power and rank had begun to lose their charms and novelty; and, as Ambrosine had once remarked, though stretched on her silken couch, she could now almost envy the wife of the outlaw St. Clair. Perhaps the principal motive for this change was jealousy; her heart sickened at the account that had transpired of their mutual happiness; and though she had rejected Monteith, it awakened all the rancour of her depraved heart, to hear he was so entirely devoted to another. For the dowager, she had lived a life of greater retirement than she was accustomed, since her meeting Monteith in the chapel. Sir James Stuart, she had no doubt, would disclose

what had passed there; and the same pride which had made her sacrifice every duty to its gratification now goaded her with perpetual thorns, lest she should see the fabric of vanity and falsehood destroyed, and her shame and cruelty revealed to the whole world.

CHAP-

CHAPTER V.



PEACE restored, the accustomed harmony reigned in the fortress: and the usual time being elapsed, the wife of Monteith gave birth to a daughter. Mistress of herself in the extremity of pain, as well as in danger, she had called about her the nurse of Randolph, Bridget, and an experienced matron of the island, and suffering for some time in silence, at length became a mother, even before that event could have been hoped by the anxious Monteith, who trembled at the danger to which she was exposed.

On St. Clair's entering her chamber, Randolph, who had long been watching an opportunity, slipped in, and, fearful

of being turned out, hid himself behind the arras. Monteith flew to his idolized wife, and blessed Heaven for her safety, with a transport that banished all remembrance of past suffering.—"Prithee, Monteith," said she, with her usual gaiety, "spare thy raptures, though when I tell thee 'tis only a girl, they will naturally cease; for my part, I am so provoked, that thou mayest e'en nurse her thyself."

"Willingly," replied he, folding the infant to his heart. "Methinks she already resembles thee, in which case she will be dearer to me than all the boys in the world, without that advantage."

"That will be no recommendation to me," answered she. "I that had flattered myself with bearing a son like thee, to have nothing but a paltry girl—out upon her—I will none of her!"

Young Randolph, who, in the satisfaction of the moment, had been over-

looked

looked in his concealment, from whence, though the covered his body, his head was poked out, at the last words of Ambrosine, cried out—"Give her to me, give her to me—I will have her myself, and love her dearly."

Laughing at the intruder, Monteith called him from his corner, and placing him, by the desire of Ambrosine, on the couch, he alternately admired and kissed the infant.

"Prophetic be thy words, Randolph!" said Ambrosine; "the ways of Heaven are not for men to discern, for who can say that hereafter, but this babe may give sons to the house of Roskelyn, and thus restore to its proper channel the rights of her father."

"Thou art romantic, Ambrosine, and in thy affection for Randolph, forgettest the hated blood from whence he sprung."

"Monteith," replied she, "thou inhe-

 ritest

ritest not the vices of thy parents, neither I hope, will he."

Fearful of Ambrosine being too much disturbed, Bridget came to remove Randolph, whose cries at the separation resounded through the fortress. A priest being fetched from Kismul, the young stranger received the name of Phillippa; and Ambrosine's health restored, she gained fresh charms in the eyes of her enraptured husband, as she nurtured the first pledge of their love to her truly maternal bosom.

During the remainder of the year, all was peace at Barra; and early in the ensuing spring, they received a visit from sir Alexander M'Gregor. With friendly warmth, he congratulated them on the happiness which surrounded them, and entreated that no hasty plan should tempt them to endeavour to change it. Educating the heir of Reskelyn among them,

them, he much approved, as a stroke of refined policy, which could only be followed by the most salutary effects; and promising to visit them frequently, after three months' stay, he left them with regret.

The children, Randolph and Phillippa, grew daily in strength and beauty; for the first, he was judged of an age to begin the rudiments of education, and Hamilton readily undertook his instruction, which he received with a readiness flattering to his tutor. Bearing a strong resemblance to Monteith in his person, his disposition, as it unfolded, in many instances wore the same character, and which custom and education promised to render in time perfectly similar. Bold and undaunted, he feared no personal danger; and, though rude and boisterous as health and the gratifications he received from his friends could make him,

the gentle voice of Ambrosine could ever recal him to order and obedience. Unaccustomed to any youthful companion till the birth of Phillippa, and possessed of the advantage of being four years her elder, he claimed a privilege of sitting on the ground to nurse her, of teaching her to walk, and sometimes on the green sod to bear her on his back, never failing to select for her the choicest part of whatever was presented to him.

Phillippa had not completed her second year, before Ambrosine gave birth to a son, which, while it claimed an equal right to the affection of his parents with their first-born, appeared to possess no superiority, not only Phillippa, but Randolph, maintaining their place in the affection of Monteith and Ambrosine; and, though Phillippa viewed the young stranger at first with an eye of jealousy, she speedily became reconciled, making

only

only this distinction, when she lisped out their names—"My little brother James, or my dear brother Randolph."

For four years after the birth of Monteith's son, all remained so quiet at Barra, that the residents could almost have forgotten they were outlaws; plenty flourished around them, which with open hands they shared with all. If any of the poor islanders lost a cow, a goat, or a sheep, they had only to make the loss known at the fortress, and it was speedily replaced. The agent of Ambrosine regularly remitted her revenues, which, together with those of Ross, Hamilton, and M'Gregor, all of which sir Alexander collected, amply supplied them; Monteith only sometimes feeling a pang of discontent and wounded pride, that he was withheld from contributing his part; this, however, he was necessitated to conceal from his wife, who ever appeared distressed at his making a distinc-

 tion

tion, in regard to their separate property.

Though peace reigned at the island, it was more enforced by the increased commotions that distracted the kingdom, than from any goodwill towards the outlaws. The discontents between the king and his nobles daily strengthened; fearful, therefore, of kindling a flame in the islands, which he might find it difficult to extinguish, he, by the advice of the most prudent of his council, resolved to take no further cognizance of the outlaws, leaving them, for the present, in inoffensive and peaceful security.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VI.



About six weeks after the feast of Christmas, in the year one thousand four hundred and thirty-seven, seven years after the attack upon the outlaws, as they were sitting one evening in social converse, the loud blast of the horn gave notice that strangers were at the gate. The dreary time of the year made a visit unexpected at the island, and all immediately conceived it must be business of moment that could bring any one at a season wherein the coast was so subject to storms.

Hastening to the gate, they found sir Alexander M'Gregor; and the cordial embrace of friendship having taken place,

veteran took his seat, and first drinking a goblet of wine, addressed them thus: —"Your oppressor is fallen! James, the haughty James, is gone to his native earth."

All started. "Dead!" interrupted Monteith; "you astonish me; he was in the prime of life and health, most visibly betokening a length of days."

"Neither health nor strength can secure a man from falsehood and murder. Sir Robert Grahame, whom he banished, has wrought his fall; he bereft him of his inheritance, and sir Robert has bereft him of his life."

"Unhappy James!" said Monteith; "though thou wert mine enemy, I grieve thy fall in such unmanly sort: but I pray you, sir Alexander, give us what particulars have reached you?"

Sir Alexander then informed them, that Walter earl of Athole, sir Robert Grahame, and divers others, having plot-

ted

ted the king's death, chose the feast of Christmas, which was held at Perth, to execute their purpose; that they assailed him in his chamber, where, after bravely defending himself, he had fallen, having first received twenty-eight wounds in various parts of his body.

"Alas! unhappy man," said Ambrosine, "his faults be forgotten, and his good deeds only remembered."

"Amen!" said Monteith; "'tis a foul act, and will stamp everlasting disgrace on the blood of its perpetrators. Was the queen with him?"

"She was, and had not escaped death, but for one of sir Robert's sons, who cried—'Shame upon the deed!' she received two wounds. The brother of the earl of March was slain in defending the king; and the fair Katherine Douglas, one of the queen's ladies, had her arm broken."

All the residents at the fortress expressed

pressed the utmost detestation of the deed—"Now, hang the man!" said De Bourg; "had he died in his bed peaceably, I would have been one of the first to sing *Te Deum*; but nature revolts against so atrocious an act. Are the murderers taken?"

"They are, and a most cruel death awaits them—tortures which, to relate, you would think could only be invented by the agents of hell. The queen-mother immediately called a parliament, for the young James hath only attained his seventh year."

"In whom will the regency be vested?" said St. Clair.

"In Archibald earl of Douglas, as it is supposed, though he is not yet formally appointed to the government."

"Amidst all this confusion," said Ambrosine, "I have one cause to be thankful to Heaven, which is, that Mouteith and all our friends have been so long at

peace,

peace, and confined by the wintry winds so many months at Barra, without other employ than telling long tales, and nursing my children."

"Why so?" inquired Monteith.

"Thy enemies are bitter; and, though they could not have proved guilt upon thee, they might have blackened thy fame, with accusing thee of a knowledge of this atrocious act."

"The lady Ambrosine's observation is just," said sir Alexander. "Leave all, Monteith, yet to time, and, believe me, thy enemies' day passed, thou shalt yet have thine."

"Though I once felt anger against the queen," said Ambrosine, "my heart bleeds for her; alas! who shall comfort her?"

"Marry," said De Bourg, "the knight of Lorn shall comfort her; 'tis not every woman who is so fastidious as the heiress of Kintail."

"Out

"Out upon thee, slanderer!" replied she; "why speakest thou thus?"

"Because, in cases of love, I have an eye like a hawk, a kind of natural divination, which never yet failed; think you not so, lady?"

"Nay, I will not vouch for thy skill; but now thou recallest it to my memory, I once thought thy eyes the most evil ones I ever saw."

"Even that circumstance, lady, stamped the truth of my skill. Monteith in vain racked his wooden head, to find out among his court-friends who had done him so essential a piece of kindness; his companions, myself excepted, did the same, and with equal wisdom. I, on the contrary, judged truly at the first glance, and ——"

"Enough on the subject," interrupted Ambrosine; "'tis the hour of supper. The death of James, though our enemy, hath left an uneasy impression on my spirits;

spirits: Heaven be merciful to his unprepared soul, and send repentance to his murderers!"

Sir Alexander tarried but a few days at the fortress, being anxious to learn how all would be arranged for the new government. He promised however to see them soon again, or at least to send them intelligence, if any thing material occurred.

No transaction of any consequence took place in the state of Scotland for near a year, when the earl of Douglas died, and sir Alexander Livingstone was appointed to succeed him in the government of the kingdom, and to have the executive power; while William Crichton was chosen chancellor, and consequently had the direction of the civil courts. This division of power was productive of the most unpleasant consequences,

quences, as the governor and chancellor were at perpetual variance, so that, for a time, there was no appearance of either law or government throughout the country, the most atrocious acts being committed with impunity, and the kingdom one continued scene of confusion and bloodshed.

Monteith and his friends felt no inclination to take the part of either faction; power was the aim of each; and they resolved to leave to the heads of the respective parties the struggle to obtain it.

Thus resolved, and cut off from noise and tumult by their situation, the instruction of the children became the business and amusement of the whole party. Randolph improved rapidly, not only in learning, but in the accomplishments befitting his rank, and the manly exercises which might hereafter be requisite to him. Phillippa, four

years

years younger, was the immediate care of her mother, and promised, in the bud, the same personal beauty and character. James Monteith had also begun his studies; and Ambrosine nurtured at her breast a second son, named St. Clair after his father.

Thus were they situated for six years, during which period the news had reached them that the queen had wedded sir James Stuart, and with it a piece of intelligence still more interesting. The knight of Lorn, as one of the first instances of the power he had gained by the marriage, had so nobly exerted himself for Monteith, that he procured from sir Alexander Livingstone a reversal of the decree that confiscated his estates to the use of the lord of Roskelyn; but the outlawry still remained, as Livingstone feared, in a time of such universal tumult, the additional weight

such

such a man might give to any party he chose to espouse.

Ambrosine, as she saw the satisfaction Monteith received from his estates being restored, was likewise highly gratified, though she did not scruple to avow the pleasure it gave her, that the law afforded him a sufficient reason for continuing on the island free from danger.

"My beloved," said he, "surely thou art the first woman that ever rejoiced at being confined in so desert a spot, when possessed of youth and beauty to grace a court; nay, I marvel that even time hath not wearied thy constancy."

"Dost thou speak from thy own feelings?" said she.

"No, on my soul, not fourteen years since, when thou gavest thyself to my arms, and I received thee as the choicest gift of Heaven, wert thou in my eyes half

half so lovely as at this moment: but to see thee cut off from a society thou wert formed to adorn, and to know that thou hast forfeited the world for me, doth frequently give me a pang."

"By my life, Monteith," replied she, "it never yet cost me a sigh. Reach me my lute—I will sing thee a song I made on the subject:—

"Within this fortress' mould'ring wall,
And blest in humble life,
My heart recoils at grandeur's call,
And gaudy courtly strife.

Ah! what to me were wealth or power,
Bereft of St. Clair's love?
My rebel heart would mourn the hour,
When grandeur banish'd love.

Reverse the scene; in quiet life,
Each day doth rise with joy,
Each morning smile on St. Clair's wife,
Nor care nor grief annoy.

The

The flatt'ring slaves of courtly fame
Cannot my envy move;
My heart will beat at St. Clair's name,
Nor grandeur banish love."

THE addition of Monteith's wealth gave him the power of increasing his benevolence, which now became more active than ever; and about two years after the recovery of his fortune, a storm having done considerable damage among the isles, particularly at Benbecula, the chief, accompanied by Ross, repaired thither, to see what assistance could be given to the inhabitants.

The charitable errand performed, they were expected to return in a few days; but the given time having elapsed without their arrival, some anxious fears began to take possession of Ambrosine, and the party left behind. Time strengthened this uneasiness; and a vessel

sel was dispatched with William to Benbecula, with orders to touch at the neighbouring islands, if no intelligence was there obtained of Monteith and Ross. In the mean time, Ambrosine's fears were too great to be concealed; she buried herself in the solitude of her chamber, without other companions but Bridget, Randolph, and her children, giving way to the anguish that overwhelmed her—"Alas! alas!" cried she, as she wept over the loved pledges of past happiness, "ye have cost me dear; but for ye, I had accompanied Monteith and lived or died with him; wretch that I am, doomed to survive him! for, hard as will be the struggle, I must as yet support this hated life for thy sake, Phillippa, beloved of thy father; for thine, James, his living image, and for thee, thou smiling innocent, St. Clair, who hast most wrought me this sorrow, by causing me to stay at Barra."

"Mother,"

"Mother," said Randolph, the tears flowing from his eyes, "what have I done that you name me not?"

"My beloved boy," exclaimed she, throwing her arms round his neck, "no love, nor duty, that I owe to these, will I neglect to thee."

Randolph returned her embrace—"Give not way to grief," said he; "my father will return; some mishap hath alone delayed his coming; should William bring no news, suffer me to go—I would travel through the world to find him."

"Alas! my child," replied she, with a look of anguish, "it must then be the world of waters; too surely the vessel has foundered, and calling down the blessing of Heaven on Ambrosine and his children, his brave soul hath yielded up its earthly struggle."

"Dear mother, think not so; the fishermen who steered their little vessel

are

are so accustomed to sail among these islands, that it is next to an impossibility that any accident should happen in such fine weather."

The return of William confirmed their fears; he brought no tidings, except that, after a stay of two days at Benbecula, Monteith and sir James Ross left the island in the vessel that brought them, attended by the same two men who navigated it thither; that they had touched at no other of the islands; nor had the islanders seen any vessel during the period, save one under Danish colours, which for some days had hovered about the opposite coast.

In a consultation that took place between Hamilton, M'Gregor, De Bourg, and their companions, on the subject, their opinions were various, though that most prevalent was, that Monteith had perished; the long interval of quiet he

had enjoyed from the persecution of his enemies banishing all suspicion concerning them.

Randolph, who, from the company of informed men, and the pains taken in his education, was more reflective than most lads of his age (now seventeen), was admitted to the consultation, and, with a firmness that astonished the whole party, held the opinion he had advanced to Ambrosine, that Monteith had not perished—"Are my dear father's enemies dead?" said he; "if they are not, may not the recovery of his property have stimulated them to revenge? Oh God!" exclaimed he, with vehemence, "perhaps they may have beguiled and slain him; if so, young as I am—I pray you jeer not at my youth—I devote my life to avenge him."

"Jeer thee, brave boy!" said M'Gregor, "a curse on him that doth! methinks

thinks the spirit of my brother Randolph dwells in thee; and, as he adopted thee, so do I."

"I am a fortunate lad," replied Randolph, looking gratefully around, "for I have many fathers; but who can speak comfort to the wounded heart of my mother, or who train the youth of my brothers to be worthy their father?"

"We devote ourselves to that duty," exclaimed, in one voice, M'Gregor, Hamilton, and De Bourg; "never shall they, during our lives, want the attention of a parent."

"For myself," said Randolph, with some confusion, "though from my father I never heard it, nor from ye, nor from the affection of my dear mother, have I ever had reason to lament it; yet I judge that I have not that near claim which my sister Phillippa, or my brothers James and St. Clair can boast."

The utmost confusion for a moment

 marked

marked the features of all.—"What mean you, Randolph?" said M'Gregor.

"I mean," replied he, "that though my claim be as near to my honoured father, yet it hath not that advantage on the side of the dear lady who calls me her son."

"And who hath entered into those disquisitions with thee?" said Hamilton.

"No one; but, from my infancy, I understood by the nurse that my mother was dead: peace be with her! for much, I fear, she was not like the lady Ambrosine; had she, my father must at some time have named her."

"Few women are equal in mind to the wife of Monteith," said Hamilton; "but let this assurance satisfy thee, that no dishonour rests upon thy birth; hereafter thou mayest know more."

"I thank you, and am satisfied; ye have dispelled a mist from my mind."

"And

"And thou hast raised one in mine," said De Bourg, who had been apparently lost in thought; "though I think it very improbable that Monteith should have fallen into the power of his enemies, yet it is possible, and, by Heaven, I will spare no pains to discover it; I will away to Scotland, and be satisfied."

"Now, if you think so," said M'Gregor, "we will all go."

"Not so; too many would but mar my purpose; Hamilton and you remain here, that, if we find it necessary, ye may collect our force; some one else will volunteer to accompany me."

Before any one could reply, De Bourg having scarcely concluded, Randolph exclaimed—"I pray, if ye love me, let me go: whose right is so near as mine?'

"My good lad, there are many ob-

jections against thy going," said Hamilton.

Randolph looked distressed.—"Ye fear me, because I am yet a boy," replied he; "but in this case, I trust, I should possess the courage of a man."

"I do not doubt it; but a motive of consequence requires thee to remain at Barra."

"Can any motive be stronger than the duty of a son to a father?" replied Randolph.

"Perhaps not; but that very duty must now restrain thee."

A stroke on the chamber-door broke off the discourse. On being opened, Ambrosine entered, leaning on her daughter Phillippa. For some days she had declined seeing even the residents of the fortress, who were shocked at the alteration that grief had made in her appearance; her face was pale, her eyes

sunken,

sunken, her form bent, and her whole frame denoted that, though she evidently struggled to keep her sorrow within the bounds of reason, that it preyed upon her life, and must inevitably destroy her.

"My friends," said she, "more than fourteen happy years have I passed among ye; but the loss of Monteith hath, alas! broken the willing chain that held me at Barra; with my children I will away to Kintail, and devote the sorrowful remainder of my life to educating them befitting so brave and noble a father. Yet, as life is uncertain, I have written a testament; and to you, my friends, Hamilton, De Bourg, M'Gregor, and his brother, sir Alexander, left the guardianship of my boys. For Phillippa, she is yet a more sacred trust; she will need the support and advice of a matron; had ye wives, the choice would be at once fixed; but, as

ye have not, select for her, in case of my death, such of your female relations as you deem most honourable; for, should disgrace assail her, never will my spirit rest."

The sobs of Phillippa interrupted her mother, and the residents in vain endeavoured to conceal their emotion, while Randolph clasped his arms round the daughter of Monteith, and mingled his tears with hers.

"Children," at length resumed Ambrosine, "fie on this weakness! I shall not die the sooner for expressing my wishes. For you, Randolph, observe me well, and, as your soul shall answer at the great and final account, *remember* what I shall now request of you."

Randolph threw himself at her feet.—"Oh mother, most beloved and honoured, speak," said he; "I will obey your commands, if you be spared to our prayers and wishes, with double pleasure;

pleasure; but if you be transmitted to your kindred angels, with the same reverence that I would, should you be then permitted to enforce the remembrance."

"Enough; the vicissitudes of man are many, and those of your life may be various; you love Phillippa better than either James or St. Clair; therefore, to your especial affection I hereafter recommend her; advise her youth, and direct her steps to happiness; and should you ever meet a villain who *thinks* of her with dishonour, plunge a dagger in his heart."

Phillippa hung down her head, though unconscious of the purport of her mother's words—"James and St. Clair," continued Ambrosine, "will also need your friendship; see that ye withhold it not; so shall ye sit with honour in the seat of your fathers."

 "Dear

"Dear mother," replied Randolph, "think not that I love not James and St. Clair; by my life, I do most truly; but Phillippa is my only sister, and I loved her so well before they were born, that my heart had scarcely any affection left to bestow, and, by my soul's hope of everlasting peace, never will I enjoy happiness that she doth not share."

"My much esteemed lady," said De Bourg, "though you have spoken thus solemnly, I trust there are many happy years in store for you."

Ambrosine raised her eyes in anguish. —"Happiness," replied she, "is torn from me for ever; the first fair wind I will away to Kintail; remember me, as I will ye all, as my best friends. To your care I leave my dear Randolph, who, I trust, will prove worthy your love."

"What have I done that you banish me

me your presence? 'tis not my fault that I am not your child; not even Phillippa loves you better than I do."

"Do not increase my emotion, Randolph—my heart needs no additional pang; necessity compels me to act thus, as thou mayest some time hence know; but, while life remains, thou wilt find me with arms open to receive thee, and a heart ready to return thy affection."

After some more discourse, Phillippa withdrew, and with her Randolph, when the conversation turned upon the future disposal of that youth. Ambrosine leaving all to their own arrangement, they resolved that no alteration should take place in their measures till more fully ascertained by time of Monteith's death, De Bourg forbearing to mention the resolution he had made of going to Scotland, fearful of encouraging false hopes.

Two days after, Ambrosine and her

children, attended by Bridget and William, left the island. The separation was painful to all, particularly to Randolph, who in vain struggled to conceal his emotion, and having accompanied them on board, on his return, climbed an eminence, in order to watch the vessel while she remained in sight.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VII.



The departure of Ambrosine appeared to renew the loss of Monteith to the inhabitants of the fortress. The intention of De Bourg furnished the conversation of the evening; and selecting a single companion, named Frazer, he resolved to depart on the morrow. To elude suspicion, he blackened his hair and brows, which were naturally fair, and assumed the dress of a common Highlandman, as also did his companion. Randolph, who found it vain to entreat to accompany him, had ceased to request it, though he particularly attended to their intentions and destination.

His character, hitherto open, appeared

for

for some days after the departure of De Bourg, to become reserved; he remained much alone, and lost the glow of high health, that used to bloom on his cheeks; he however made no complaint; and Hamilton and M'Gregor, attributing the change to the loss of Ambrosine and her children, paid no attention, as they concluded that time alone would remove his uneasiness. The restraint laid upon him was in reality the cause of the alteration they perceived; it continually preyed upon his fancy, and bewildered his thoughts, to conjecture the reason of his being detained: he easily discovered that some mystery concerned himself, but it was too carefully concealed from him to form the most distant idea of the truth. He had long since known that Ambrosine was not his mother, but he loved her no less on that account; and the assurance that he had received, that no disgrace was attached to his birth,

highly

highly gratified him; "but if so," thought he, "why is my unhappy mother never named? if she was virtuous, though low born, the name of Monteith was enough to make her birth forgotten; that my father must have loved her is past dispute; yet he is neither capricious, unjust, nor cruel; and I in vain attempt to account for his conduct. A motive of consequence detains me at Barra, says De Bourg; strong indeed must that motive be, when it takes place of the affection and duty of a son. Had they condescended to disclose it, it might have restrained me; but now it is repugnant to nature, which calls upon me to seek my father, whom I cannot think has perished at sea. The house of Roskelyn and the old court of Scotland, well I know, are his enemies; but where or how the enmity arose, I know not, though I have no dispute of the injustice done

my

my father, who himself possesses the soul of honour."

Such in part were the reflections of Randolph, who, with the thoughtless inexperience of youth, resolved to escape from the island, and seek Monteith even in the dwelling of his enemies. He had indistinctly heard at times of the disguises assumed by St. Clair and his companions, and resolved to have recourse to the same expedient, by concealing himfelf under a feigned character, to gain, if possible, the intelligence he wished.

Unsuspected by the residents of the fortress, he, in less than a week, found an opportunity to put his design into execution; for a small vessel laying off the coast, he arose one morning early, and going on board, sailed with the fishermen to the port of Ardnamurchan. The flight of Randolph was not discovered for some hours, but once known, caused universal

universal confusion; the clothes he wore were all he had taken, and, though they surmised he had some few demies of gold in his pocket, as he was always liberally supplied, yet they knew they could not be many, and must be soon expended, in a country to which he was an entire stranger. That he would take the way to Edinburgh or Roskelyn, to join De Bourg, they had no doubt, but felt the improbability of his performing such a journey, so ill provided. His flight too broke upon all the schemes they had formed; for, should he be discovered, they could only reap disgrace, instead of the advantage they had promised themselves from detaining him, an advantage however much lessened by the loss of Monteith. After mature consideration, one of the inmates of the fortress went in pursuit of the runaway, with a commission to pass first into Inverness-shire and

and take the counsel of sir Alexander M'Gregor on the subject.

The vessel in which Randolph had sailed to Ardnamurchan speedily returned to Barra, and brought a letter to the outlaws—they hastily tore it open, and found these words:

"BELOVED AND EVER-HONOURED FRIENDS,

"Forgive the first act of my life which hath been contrary to your commands; to you I owe the second duty, but to my father the first; and, while my heart whispers he may yet live, I cannot resist the strong impulse of seeking him. I know you will dwell on my youth and inexperience; but surely, at seventeen, the son of Monteith, educated by men like those at the fortress, should be capable of more than a lad

lad who hath not possesssed such advantages. Fear not therefore for me, though dropped as it were into a new world; I experience no dread—my heart beats light. Should my errand be successful, with what joy shall I return to Barra! should our fears be confirmed, that my honoured parent be indeed lost to us for ever, as to those most worthy to supply his place, will I fly to you, and study, by future obedience, to obliterate from your remembrance this disobedient act."

"RANDOLPH MONTEITH."

"By my soul," said M'Gregor, "this boy's obstinacy makes him more estimable; soon may he return, for too surely do I feel his errand will be fruitless."

"A sight of his arm would at once make him known to his parents," replied Hamilton; "but that being covered,

vered the discovery is not probable, should they even meet."

"Be that as it may, we must leave the event to chance," replied M'Gregor; "it will be less trouble for Roskelyn to educate ten sons like himself, than to obliterate from the mind of Randolph the sentiments he hath imbibed from the family of Monteith, and to see his heir with such feelings will sting his mean heart to the quick, and afford us a noble revenge; would that Monteith had lived to share it!"

In the interval of confusion at Barra, De Bourg and his companion had reached the city of Edinburgh. The contentions of party yet ran high, and intestine broils, unchecked by the minority of the king, still disgraced and deluged the land with blood. De Bourg hastened

hastened to Roskelyn, and, taking up his abode in a cottage, soon gained an opportunity to see Ralph, the father of William.

The good old man, by frequent advice from his son, was well aware of the friendship and protection shewn him by the outlaws; he was therefore no sooner ascertained of the identity of De Bourg, which was easily effected by his knowledge of various circumstances, than he readily entered into his views. The chevalier, after relating the loss of Monteith, declared the suspicions he entertained, that he had fallen into the power of his enemies; and pressed Ralph, by all he held sacred, to inform him whether, by any word or action that might have dropped from the family of Roskelyn, he could judge if these suspicions were well founded.

Ralph heard him with visible emotion, but declared his firm belief of their innocence.

innocence.—"The lord Roskelyn," said he, "is now here, and so are also the dowager, and the young lord and lady Matilda, her grandchildren; as for the countess, she is at the old castle in Upper Lorn, which she inherited from her father. To say the truth, I am old, or, by the Holy Virgin! this castle should be no service for me; for we have such turmoils and disputes, as render it, even to the vassals, a hell upon earth."

"What disputes?" said De Bourg; "I thought the lord Roskelyn kept out of all party contentions."

"In faith, good sir," replied Ralph, "he has had too many contentions at home to need any abroad; and, for the last twelve years, they have increased so rapidly, that at length the castle would no longer hold them. The noble Monteith has had a blessed escape, and my lord is severely punished for his share of the treachery; for, if ever fiend dwelt in

a woman's

a woman's form, it is in that of the countess."

"Would you infer then," said De Bourg, "that family contentions are the cause of Lady Roskelyn's absence?"

"In faith are they; she hath neither the duty of a wife, nor the affection of a mother. In consequence of a quarrel that took place some four months since, she quitted the castle, leaving her children, the lord John and the lady Matilda, with their father."

"How fares the dowager in this confusion?"

"Age comes upon her apace, and the sins of her youth intrude upon her fancy; she hath therefore endowed two chapels, the one to St. Magdalen, the other to the Virgin."

"Marry, she doth well," replied De Bourg, "to procure friends for the time to come; for surely she will need them at the final account."

Ralph

Ralph then informed the chevalier, that the carl had not left Roskelyn for the last eight months; adding, that, if an event of such consequence as seizing Monteith had been designed, or had taken place, some action or word must have transpired to disclose it.

De Bourg acquiesced in the justice of the observation with a sigh, and, shaking the old man by the hand, he informed him, that the following day he should depart; but that, previous to his return to the island, he should visit Kintail, as he much feared the wife of Monteith would not long survive her loss.

RANDOLPH, on leaving Barra, had resolved to pursue the steps of De Bourg; he well knew the chevalier was too good-humoured, and too sincerely his friend, to be long angry with him. After having landed at Ardnamurchan, he re-

solved

solved to inquire his way forward toward the capital, knowing that he then should be but a short distance from Roskelyn. Reaching the port in the afternoon, he proceeded but a few miles, when, finding a single cottage, he resolved to seek a lodging for the night; for, as far as his eye could stretch, he could discern no other dwelling. Striking against the door, a rough voice asked who was without?—"A stranger youth," replied Randolph, "who entreats food and lodging for the night."

The door was opened by a man of the middle age, of the largest size, rough in appearance, and clad in a coarse garb. He bade the youth enter, and viewing him attentively, after a pause, said, he was welcome. On the hearth blazed a good fire, and over it was suspended a pot, whose savoury smell betokened it contained food that would be acceptable to a weary traveller. By the side of the

fire sat an old woman, meanly clad, and whose meagre, harsh, and wrinkled exterior gave to Randolph the first ill impression he had received of age, which he ever before had viewed with particular reverence. She was preparing for the supper, but, on his entrance, reached a stool and placed it by the hearth. The person of Randolph claimed the attention of his hosts; his open, noble mien, and well-formed limbs, gave him the appearance of being at least two years older than he really was; his raiment, though plainly made, was of the finest materials; and the commanding dignity of his manner and address such as neither simple garments nor affected poverty could conceal.

"You are a young traveller, my gentle guest," at length said the host; "you come not far, I ween?"

Randolph paused; never before had he found it necessary to lie, and, blushing,

ing, he answered—"I come from Inverness, and travel to Edinburgh."

"A long journey, master; you will need a horse."

"I am strong, and, accustomed to walk, find it no toil."

"Ay, but 'tis a weary way, and will need both perseverance and money."

"The first, I hope I possess; for the latter, I am but thinly provided."

"I'll warrant your parents were right sorry to part with you?" said the old woman.

Randolph loved not to be thus questioned; but, unwilling to incur suspicion by declining to reply, he answered—"My family's grief and my own were equal."

The supper being placed upon the board prevented more discourse, and, though served in the roughest manner, its contents bespoke that want dwelled not among the inmates of the cottage.

Supper ended, M'Lellan, the host, produced a keg of spirits, of which he in vain pressed his young guest to partake. —"I thank ye," said Randolph, "I like it not; my welcome hath already exceeded my expectation: permit me to make what acknowledgement is in my power." So saying, he drew a small bag from his pocket, and presented a demy to his hostess.

"Holy father," cried the hostess, "I have no change for such a piece."

"I need it not," said Randolph; "I must intrude upon you for a bed and a breakfast to-morrow."

"Right welcome, master," replied M'Lellan; "know you the road you must take?"

"No—you will be kind enough to direct me."

"I will take you a few miles on your journey."

"I thank

"I thank you, and will now retire to rest."

"Do so; we will rise early. Mother," added he, addressing the old woman, "light young master to his chamber." The dame obeyed, and Randolph retired to rest.

CHAPTER VIII.



THOUGH Randolph was early stirring, he found his host already risen and gone out. The old woman was preparing breakfast, and in a short time, M'Lellan returned. The meal being ended, they departed, the host leading the youth over the mountains for the space of three miles; then, pointing out the road, he bade him farewell.

As Randolph pursued his way, the country was mountainous, dreary, and unpeopled; but, unaccustomed to villany, he knew no fear. He had proceeded about two miles, when, from the hollow of one of the mountains, he saw two men approach. On meeting, one said—

"Good-day,

"Good-day, young master; we are poor fellows; can you give us a little money to help us on our way?"

Though their appearance was by no means prepossessing, Randolph was too much unacquainted with the world to surmise they were robbers; he therefore replied—"I possess but little, but a part I will willingly give you." So speaking, he drew his purse, and presented a small piece to the man; the first speaker saying—"In faith, a noble boy; but, master, we must have more; this is not sufficient to supply our wants."

The manner of the robbers conveyed to the mind of Randolph an idea of the truth, and made him recollect for a moment that he had no arms, or, if he had, that he was no match for two such muscular villains, who he perceived had both swords and dirks.—"You ask too much," replied he; "what I could spare,

I gave willingly; you must apply elsewhere for more."

"We will go no further; so no delay," said one, drawing his dirk and presenting it to his breast; we are not given to joke; we judge you are a runaway, so you can but return home for a fresh supply." As the first spoke, the other drew his sword, and repeated the demand in a yet more peremptory manner.

Randolph's anger was aroused, and, with a spirit beyond his years, he snatched the dirk from the robber that held it to his breast, and, taking a sudden aim, struck it through his right arm. His villanous accomplice immediately levelled a blow at the youth's head with his sword, and struck him to the ground, where he lay senseless. While the wounded robber tied up his arm, his comrade rifled the pockets of Randolph, and, in all probability, would have

stripped

stripped and slain him, had they not perceived on the hill above them some horsemen, who they feared might discover the deed and pursue them; so, hastening away with the purse, they left the youth bleeding on the ground.

The horsemen, though they had not seen the act, on reaching the spot, perceived the yet senseless body; and, raising him, they bound up the wound in his head, and, actuated by humanity, placed him on one of their horses, which they led gently forward, looking for some dwelling, where they might procure assistance: winding around a mountain for about two miles, they at length reached a valley, at the extreme part of which stood an ancient castle, strong, but of no great extent; there, sounding the horn at the gate, they craved admittance for the wounded stranger.

"This is no hospital," replied a surly porter; "ten miles farther there is a

 monastery,

monastery, where the monks have nothing else to do but to pray and tend the sick."

"Shame on you!" replied one of the horsemen; "see you not that the youth must die, if speedy help be not procured? We judge he hath fallen among robbers, for we found this dirk lying by him, but the wound in his head is apparently the cut of a sword: his clothes bespeak him above the common rank."

"Then why take ye not care of him yourselves?" replied the porter.

"We are strangers in this part of the country—merchants travelling from Inverness to Berwick."

"Marry, you deal in sorry merchandize," replied he; "you will find no sale for sick or wounded here; you must carry him to another market."

The sight of the horsemen at the gate, and the report of a dying youth, assembled all the domestics, who, however,

were

were unanimous in refusing to admit a stranger, until a young damsel, advancing, said—"Delay a moment—I will endeavour to obtain leave; our mistress surely cannot shut the gates against such an unfortunate sufferer." So saying, she hastened into the castle, and speedily returned, attending a lady, who, after viewing the youth with cold curiosity, and questioning the merchants with haughty and repulsive dignity, ordered him to be admitted and led to one of the chambers appropriated to the domestics of the castle.

The merchants, satisfied with having procured him protection, departed; while Randolph, restored to recollection, heard with disgust the difficulty his humane preservers met with to gain him admittance; but, too weak to express resentment, he entered the dwelling, leaning on the friendly Jean, who had exerted herself in his favour, and one of

the male domestics, who conducted him to a chamber.

Placing him on a couch, while the man dressed the wound in his head, Jean ran to fetch him a cup of wine; and somewhat restored, he was questioned whether he had received any other hurt? he assured them to the contrary; and, leaving him to his repose, they quitted the apartment.

For some days, Randolph found himself unable to rise; during which time, no attention on the part of the friendly Jean was wanting. At length, strong enough to leave his bed, he ardently longed for a complete re-establishment, in order to be able to pursue his way; fearful of missing the chevalier, but, destitute of money, he was puzzled to devise the means.

On resuming his clothes, which lay in the chamber, he was astonished to find beside them the dirk, which he recollected

lected to have heard the merchants say was found by his side, and which he had no doubt was that with which he had struck the robber. "Glad as I should be of a weapon," said he, mentally revolving on the subject, "I will none of this; the dirk of an assassin suits not the hand of the son of Monteith."

As he reflected, his eyes were fixed upon the dagger, when suddenly a universal trembling shook his whole frame, he breathed with difficulty, his eyes projected beyond their sockets, and every function of life seemed suspended: somewhat recovered from his emotion, he rushed upon the dagger, and, clasping it in his clenched hand, he sunk upon a seat, and gave a loose to all the bitterness of grief.—"Gracious God!" exclaimed he, wildly pressing the dagger to his lips, "and is it indeed thus? hath my noble and beloved parent fallen by the villanous hand of an assassin? Oh, why

why is this? Honour and probity are said to be protected by Heaven; if so, why did he fall? was no eye awake to preserve him from rapine and murder? The odds must have been great, indeed, when Monteith and Ross fell: wretched lad, that I am, to lose a father and a friend by such accursed hands! Oh, Justice! Justice! give to him who hath the best claim, the means, the power, the strength to revenge his death, and to sheath *this* dagger home to the murderer's heart!"

The dirk, at first almost unheeded by Randolph, had suddenly, as he looked upon it, rivetted his whole attention; an hundred times in his infancy, fixed in its sheath, had he played with it, too surely identified by the initials of Randolph M'Gregor, from whom it had reverted to Monteith, who constantly wore it in his girdle.

Grief, and the confusion of his thoughts, for some time made him incapable of

forming

forming any decisive opinion; at length, however, he resolved to keep the discovery he had made secret, and, instead of seeking the chevalier, to re-measure his steps, and hasten for counsel to Barra. A thought struck him of going first to Kintail, where his affections most led him; but to bear such news to his mother, as he termed her, was impossible, and banished the idea as speedily as it arose.—"No," said he, "never may she know it, unless a revenge befitting the atrocity of the deed precede the recital!"

Lost in thought, he was insensible of the entrance of the youthful Jean, who came to bring him refreshment. "Holy Mary!" exclaimed she, "are you worse? your looks frighten me: I have brought you food and wine; I pray you take some; it will revive you."

"I thank you, but cannot," returned Randolph; "I am sick at heart."

"Nay,

"Nay, then," said she, "your fever is returned; your face is crimson; surely our lady is cruel, not to call in some skilfull leech to attend you; I will go and beg her to send for one."

"No, good Jean, I am in truth better; a sudden recollection only hath crossed my mind and agitated my spirits."

"The vassals think you have eloped from the house of your father," said she; "if so, when you are recovered, you can return; they will forget their sorrow on seeing you safe."

"Alas; I have no father," said Randolph, bursting into tears.

"Dear youth, take not on thus heavily; neither have I a father, and my mother is far from me; would I had never left her to follow the countess, whose ungracious temper makes me feel my loss every hour!"

"I grieve at it; I judge you mean your mistress; I saw her on entering the castle:

castle: by what I can remember of her person, she was the fairest woman I ever saw, one excepted."

"She is, though past the bloom of youth; but, for all her beauty and her riches, I would rather be as I am, simple Jean Grant, than the countess of Roskelyn, were I obliged to take her heart with her person."

Randolph started—"The countess of Roskelyn! repeated he; "is the countess of Roskelyn the lady of this castle?"

"Yes, truly," replied Jean; "why do you express such wonder?"

"Wonder! no," answered Randolph, scarcely able to conceal his astonishment; "I have heard of the earl, but thought he dwelt near Edinburgh."

"And so he doth," replied she; "but some family difference made the countess leave the castle of Roskelyn."

"Is she here without friend or companion?"

panion?" said Randolph; "if so, she will speedily return, I judge."

"She appears in no haste; the world says, she was never partial to the lord of Roskelyn, but, beguiled by grandeur, gave her hand without her heart."

"Hath she children?"

"Yes, two; the lord John and the lady Matilda: but I must away; I pray ye, let me see you take some food before I go."

"I cannot; let me not detain you; I grieve to cause you such trouble, without a means of return."

"You are unkind to speak thus; I only vex my power is so small, and that you have not the benefit of better skill."

"I thank you, and can never forget but that for you I had, in all probability, lost my life; for, without your interference, I had never gained admittance."

"Name it not; farewell—I will return as speedily as possible."

Randolph

Randolph was not displeased to be left to himself; the discovery that he was in a dwelling appertaining to his father's, as he considered him, most implacable enemy, and as such, he conjectured, his own, filled him with various reflections. Since the discovery of the dirk, his heart had, in a great measure, exculpated the lord of Roskelyn of treachery towards Monteith; but, on a second consideration, the weapon being found so near the dwelling of the countess staggered him, as his father had not been heard of since he quitted Benbecula. Weak as he was, his first resolution had been to return immediately to the island; but now, on more mature reflection, he resolved to profit by his situation, and, if possible, remain a few days at the castle, in order to observe carefully all that passed.

In the mean time, the young Jean, caught by the graceful person of Randolph,

dolph, was exerting all her influence with the countess.—"He was friendless," she said, "and, stripped by the robbers, was destitute of the means of reaching Edinburgh. Indeed, noble dame," added she, "he seems of gentle kin; for his manners are so mild, yet so dignified, that he might grace any situation. I would that you would condescend to question him; I answer, the result will be in his favour."

"I have already more knaves than please me," replied the countess; "thinkest though I shall entertain another to please thee?"

"To please me? Heaven forefend! I wish no knaves, lady."

"Then learn silence. Is the lad ready to go hence?"

"No; he was this very day like to die."

"Whence comes he?"

"Beyond Inverness; an orphan, lady."

"For

"For what goes he to Edinburgh?"

"He did not say; but as I should guess, to procure employ; and truly he cannot long need it, for never did I see so noble a countenance."

"A goodly recommendation to a fool's heart; no wonder it found so easy a passport to thine."

"Doth beauty reach only fool's hearts, lady?" replied Jean pertinently.

Lady Roskelyn fixed her eyes on the damsel, who modestly cast her's down. To avow the truth, she had selected Jean to attend her, for the simplicity of her manners; but, though her strongest characteristic was innocence, yet it was unmixed with folly or ignorance. To nature she owed much, to education little; but, blest with a pleasing person, and a humane heart, she deserved a better mistress than the lady Roskelyn.

"You grow too flippant, wench," answered the lady, appropriating to herself

self the meaning of Jean's question; "when the boy is able, let me see him."

The friendly heart of Jean was so rejoiced at this condescension, that it immediately obliterated from her mind the former ungraciousness of her mistress, having no doubt but that she must view Randolph with the same partial eyes as herself, and consequently grant him the protection which she supposed he so much needed.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IX.



JEAN hastened to Randolph's chamber, where she related the permission she had obtained; but, far from appearing delighted at the favour, he seemed lost in thought, and in vain attempted to pretend a satisfaction he did not feel; for the more he reflected, the more the murder of Monteith overpowered every other consideration, and his answers were at once vague and abstracted from the purpose.

Jean looked at the food she had before brought; and found it untouched, and, with great persuasion, at length prevailed on him to drink a cup of wine. Somewhat revived, they conversed toge-

ther until the evening drew in, when her duty again called her to the countess.

Randolph's thoughts were so busied in the unpleasant circumstances of the day, that he was scarcely sensible of the lapse of time. Repeatedly had he thrown himself upon the couch, and as frequently risen, and, unable to sleep, had watched the rising of the moon from his window.

Suddenly the sky became obscured; torrents of rain poured down, universal darkness reigned around him, and the inhabitants of the castle were apparently buried in sleep. His chamber was even with an outward court, to which his window opened, and where he stood gazing at or rather listening to the storm, when suddenly a gleam of light shone on the opposite side of the castle, and, a moment after, three men crossed the court. Randolph listened attentively, but they were silent; and the light of the torch which the one carried flashing

on

on the countenance of his companion, rendering his features distinguishable, Randolph, to his infinite surprise, recognised his host M'Lellan.

The hour, and the silence with which they passed, gave rise to some unfavourable thoughts in Randolph's mind, and, watching, he saw them pass an opening on the opposite side, where the beams of the torch were soon lost to his sight.

In the morning, the youth waited with extreme impatience for the usual visit from Jean, who, however, did not appear until past the hour of noon. With her accustomed kindness, she observed his pallid looks, inquired after his health, and informed him, that her duty to the countess had so entirely employed her, that she had found it impossible to see him earlier.

Randolph first replied to her questions, then, with more adroitness, or rather art, than he had ever before used, he

he insensibly changed the discourse to his meeting the robbers, and to his previously passing the night at the lone cottage of M'Lellan.

"At the cottage of M'Lellan!" repeated Jean, with visible emotion; "are you sure it was there you slept the night before you met the robbers?"

"Yes; his mother called him by that name at supper; he is a muscular, hard-featured man. Do you know him?"

Jean looked cautiously around—"I know not how," said she, "but I regard you as a brother, and I am sure you will never betray the confidence I place in you; were I once more safe in my mother's humble dwelling at Roskelyn, the wealth of Scotland should not again tempt me to quit it. That M'Lellan is a villain, I have no doubt; for I have frequently heard it whispered among the vassals; but I shall surprise you more, when I tell you, that he is frequently

here,

here, and admitted to long conferences with the countess."

"But why should the vassals think him a villain, Jean?"

"Nay, I know not," replied she, hesitating; "but I should not wonder if he was concerned with the robbers who had so nearly murdered you."

Jean's observation had its full effect on the mind of Randolph; he recollected some circumstances which he thought justified her suspicions, as the questions put to him on the evening at the cottage—some significant looks which passed between the mother and son, when he gave them the demy from his purse; and yet what more strongly corroborated it than either of the above circumstances was the care that M'Lellan took to direct him to keep the lower way, which was not only intricate and lonely, but, as the domestic who dressed his wound informed him, was considerably more

round about than if he had taken the open path, which was on the side of the mountain. Granting these suspicions were well founded, there was scarcely a doubt but that M'Lellan must have been a party in the murder of Monteith—a reflection which overpowered every other sentiment, and made him burst into tears. The sympathizing heart of Jean caught the infection; she mingled her tears with his, and endeavoured to comfort him, by saying that, even supposing M'Lellan to be concerned with the villains who robbed him, at least he was now safe within the walls of the castle, where, whatever might be M'Lellan's real character, he did not dare shew it.

"Alas! I think not of myself," replied he; "an object more dear to my heart engrosses all my thoughts. You have said, dear Jean, that you regard me as your brother; I will confide in you

you as a sister." He then informed her, that, some few weeks before, he had lost his father in so secret a manner, that he resolved to go in search of him; that, in the dirk of the assassin, he instantly recognised the weapon worn by his parent—a proof too certain that the same villain had been concerned in his death.

Though Randolph was thus explicit, he neither told the name of his family nor whence he came; but concluded by conjuring her, if she knew aught of M'Lellan to corroborate his suspicions, that she would declare it.

"Swear then," said she, "that you will never disclose what I shall unfold to you."

"Never, by my life! nay, by my soul! therefore dear Jean speak."

"Be not so hasty; what I have to say cannot relate to you, though it will shew the reason I have to think so ill of M'Lellan. About six weeks since, I

 happened

happened to fix the robe of the countess not to her liking; she had for more than a month before, been uncommonly harsh and peevish, and on this occasion struck me repeated blows. I had no refuge but tears, and I wept during the whole day, and at night, could not sleep, but sat at the window thinking of Roskelyn, and repining at my mother's folly, who, for the sake of gain, had placed me with the haughty countess. My chamber is not far distant from the portal, and, an hour before midnight, I heard a noise at the outward gate; the horn was sounded with violence, and the old porter arose, cursing the intruders in so loud a voice, that I could distinctly hear him.

"The gate was at length unbarred, and a man entered, whom, by a torch which old Sandy held to his face, I clearly recognised for M'Lellan, having seen him twice before in conference with the

the countess. Though it was the dead of night he insisted on her being called, and was at length obeyed, by the old porter beating at my chamber-door for that purpose, when, wrapping a plaid over my garments to conceal that I had not been undressed, I awoke the lady Roskelyn, who instantly arose, and, scarcely taking time to put on sufficient raiment, hastened to the hall, where M'Lellan awaited her alone. On entering, she bade me begone, in an authoritative tone; but such was her impatience to enter on the subject, that she said, ere I closed the door—'Is it done?' to which M'Lellan answered—'It is;' and I heard no more."

"Alas; alas!" exclaimed Randolph, in an agony of grief, "it was the murder of my father they spoke of."

"Not so," interrupted Jean, thinking that sorrow had disordered his senses;

 "what

"what could the countess have to do with the murder of your father? Nay, compose yourself, or I will say no more."

Randolph, though agonized like one stretched on the rack, conquered his feelings and prayed her to continue.

"I confess," resumed she, "that my curiosity was completely awakened, and, stealing gently upstairs to the corridor that surrounds the top of the hall, I could see, though not hear, what passed. The countess presented a purse to M'Lellan, and soon after went to a massy chest that stands in a recess, from whence she took a bundle of large keys, which she also gave into his hands, when, making his obedience he left her. For some time after his departure, she sat lost in thought; then hastily paced up and down the hall, in visible agitation, until, fearing she might call for me suddenly, I went down and awaited her

commands;

commands; I might, however, have spared myself the trouble, for she retired no more that night."

"The weight of blood hung heavy on her soul," said Randolph, "and will plunge it into everlasting perdition."

"No blood, I trust, was spilled; for, on the ensuing night, at nearly the same hour, M'Lellan returned, and with him five men, guarding a man of noble deportment, but whose face I could not discern."

Randolph could scarce restrain his impatience, but, grasping her hand, prayed her to continue.

"I have little more to say. The domestics had all been ordered to retire early to rest; but, perhaps, I was not the only one whom curiosity kept watching; for, on the ensuing day, an air of mystery hung on all the vassals of the castle."

"Accursed night! and doubly accursed

the hands that shed his blood! too surely he was then slain!"

"No, no; he was brought through the court of the castle, and taken to the watchtower, of which those were doubtless the keys that M'Lellan received from the countess the night before."

"Oh God! is it possible that he may yet live!" exclaimed Randolph in a transport of joy.

Jean looked astonished—"I should judge so; for a guard dwells still in the tower, and they would hardly lose their time in watching a dead body; but you are too soon depressed, and too soon elated; this stranger can be nothing to you."

"Perhaps not; but are you sure he is still there?"

"Most certain, though no one is admitted but M'Lellan and his crew, who, I heard old David and others say, were no better than common robbers, the remains

mains of the rebellious band of Robert Grahame, who was some years since executed for the murder of the late king."

At that moment Jean was loudly called for, when Randolph hastily entreated her, for the love of Heaven, to be silent in respect of what had passed.

On the whole, Randolph's heart was somewhat lightened; it was possible his father yet lived, if, in reality, he was the prisoner alluded to by Jean. There were, however, many circumstances to damp this hope, as, how could a lawless *land* banditti enthral him on the sea?—what had become of sir James Ross?—or, was the house of Roskelyn so inveterate in its enmity, why was he only in the custody of the countess?

Though these reflections were, on the whole, a considerable drawback on the satisfaction he experienced, yet a part of

his woe was alleviated; and for the first time, during several hours, he ate of the food that had been brought him.

CHAP-

CHAPTER X.



In the mean time, the countess was bestowing on the innocent Jean every bitter invective that her malicious mind could invent: she had called for her thrice, and her being found in Randolph's apartment furnished matter sufficient for reproach, till, having wearied herself, (for she gained no reply but tears), she called one of her vassals, and commanded the stranger to be brought before her.

Randolph started at hearing the order, but, collecting himself, he followed the domestic to the hall. His head was yet obliged to be bound up, and his face was at once pale, from the recent loss of

blood,

blood, and the commotions his mind had endured: in spite of all, his natural good mien still preponderated, and the countess viewed him with more kindness than she was wont.

Randolph had entered into her presence with the most fixed hatred, and with the deadly idea of revenge; but whether her beauty, which was still dazzling, or the secret impulse of nature, softened his resentment, he thought, as he looked on her, it was impossible she should be so guilty as his imagination suggested.

"Young man," said she, addressing him, "when I admitted you into my dwelling, from motives of humanity, I did not expect you to appropriate the whole time of the silly damsel whom I employ in attending upon my own person."

"If I have offended, lady, I crave your pardon; confined by the wound I received,

received, if at any time I have detained Jean in listening to my complaints, mine alone be the blame."

"What age are you?"

"Somewhat turned of seventeen."

"You are surely more."

"I would then, lady, that my experience and acquirements equalled my looks."

"What is your name, and of what family are you?"

Randolph, who had considered such questions might be asked him, replied, though he blushed as he spoke—"My name is Randolph; my family a younger branch of that of M'Gregor."

"Why have you left your paternal home?"

"To seek preferment; the loss of my father made exertion necessary."

"To those who placed you in the way to achieve your purpose, could you be a true and faithful lad?"

"Yes,

"Yés, provided I loved them."

"The merit would be less then, if thou didst not: couldst thou love me?"

"Considering only your face, lady, methinks I could worship you."

Lady Roskelyn's leading trait was vanity; the reply of Randolph, therefore, taken in the literal sense, at once rendered her his friend.—"Well then," replied she, "endeavour to regain thy health, and I will engage thee in my train."

"I thank you, lady."

Jean was delighted to have procured the protection of the countess for Randolph; nor was the youth himself displeased, as he had no doubt, that, if once admitted among the vassals of the house, he should find an opportunity to satisfy himself if it was really Monteith that was detained in the watchtower.

On leaving the countess, he retired to his chamber, where, ruminating on what had passed, he could not avoid the following

lowing reflections:—"Confined within the narrow limits of the island of Barra, how anxiously did I wish to see the world! Alas! how bitter the specimen I have already experienced! Robbed and wounded by the hands of villains; obliged to descend to lies and art to conceal a name on which I fix my highest glory; and to wear a face of dissimulation and satisfaction to a woman, who, perhaps, hath had a principal hand in the distresses, if not the death, of my honoured parent."

A thought then again crossed the mind of Randolph, to hasten back to Barra, for a force sufficient to release Monteith; but the uncertainty that it was really him checked the intention:—"Besides," thought he, as he still more reflected on the subject, "while I am gone, he may be conveyed where I may never again discover him, or perhaps slain; and here, should I fail to set

him

him free, I can at least evince my love, and die with him."

The vassals of the countess were too numerous, for the addition of one comrade to cause either wonder or jealousy, and, particularly, as Randolph confined himself to his chamber until his wound should be completely healed.

Randolph's thoughts during this period never wandered from his main design; he had waited two evenings, and, at nearly the same hour, seen men cross the court, and whom he now conjectured to be designed to relieve the guard kept on the prisoner: resolved to be ascertained, he, on the third night, taking his dirk, followed them through several windings, concealing himself occasionally behind the buttresses of the castle: at length he found his conjectures confirmed; for, the three men having entered the watchtower, speedily after the same number came out, bearing a torch, which shewing

shewing their faces, Randolph again recognised among them M'Lellan.

The youth's disposition was naturally hasty and passionate; and his education had been such, that valour and honour, in his opinion, should be the first traits to distinguish manhood. Situated therefore as he was, he suffered severely from the constraint he was obliged to put on, by concealing himself at such a moment; but prudence, not only on his own account, but on that of Monteith, required it; and he suffered the villains to pass without notice.

Randolph walked round the tower, but no light was discernible, except in the lower apartment, where the youth conjectured the guard was placed; and, climbing up to the grated windows, found his supposition verified; for, before a blazing fire on the hearth, sat the three men whom he had seen enter, and, on a table, their broadswords unsheathed,

and

and a jug of wine, of which they had apparently drank so freely, that their snoring assured him there was no danger of his being discovered.

Descending from the window, he fixed his eyes on the higher chamber, and gave a loud whistle; but all was silent as death, and, fearful of creating an alarm, which could be productive of no real utility, he at length retired to his apartment.

On the ensuing day, he mixed among the vassals, and, crossing one of the galleries, encountered M'Lellan, who had just been honoured with a conference with the countess. The villain started at sight of the youth; for, employed only at the tower, he seldom entered the castle but for provision, and then held little converse with the domestics; he was therefore unacquainted with the youth's admittance.

Randolph felt at once the necessity of dissimulation,

dissimulation, and replied to his questions with apparent openness: M'Lellan expressed his sorrow at his being wounded, and particularly inquired whether he should recognise the villains who attacked him? Randolph repressed his feelings, though his heart beat high.—"How is it possible for me to recollect them?" said he; "do you allow nothing for the confusion of my mind at that moment? they were common robbers I deem, who have no settled home; and to seek them would be useless."

"Ay, if you knew them not," answered M'Lellan, regaining his courage; and hastily wishing the youth restored to health, he left him.

Randolph, during this interval, was not unmindful of Jean; for her he felt a grateful affection, which led him to wish her under the protection of the wife of Monteith. For the maid, her sentiments were mingled with one more tender:

der: the manner of Randolph, his person, and attention to her, had all conspired to interest her inexperienced heart, and to give it a feeling she had never before felt.

The agitation of Randolph respecting the prisoner banished sleep from his eyelids, and, rising early, he resolved to walk round and examine every avenue to the castle. It had originally been strongly fortified; but time, and the little attention paid to it for some years, had caused it to fall to decay; so that he readily conjectured that, could the prisoner once be liberated, the means to complete his escape would not be difficult. Randolph's curiosity satisfied respecting the internal strength of the castle, he resolved to view the outside; passing therefore the gates, he walked round the walls, and thence ascending the mountain at the bottom of which he had been attacked, he sat himself down

to

to revolve on the means to pursue. For some time, his head sunk on his breast, he remained lost in thought, when suddenly he was recalled to recollection by two horsemen in the beaten path, some fathoms beneath him, calling to ask whether there was any dwelling within a short distance, where they could procure refreshment for themselves and horses? Randolph started, raised his eyes, and, regardless of the space between himself and the travellers, with the agility of a mountain-deer, at once glided down the steep, with an emotion that neither left him the power to think nor speak.

"Is it possible? can I believe my sight? Randolph! How camest thou hither?" exclaimed one of the strangers, in a voice of astonishment, leaping from his horse.

"Blessed, blessed chance!" replied Randolph in a transport, siezing his hand;

hand; "dear De Bourg, Heaven surely sent you; I shall yet be the happiest lad alive."

"By my soul, I am lost in surprise!" said the chevalier; "where hast thou been? how camest thou here? thy looks are pale and sickly: How do our friends at Barra? are they with thee? where dost thou dwell?

"Chevalier," answered Randolph, blushing, "not long after your departure, I fled from Barra, in hopes of joining you, to seek my father; but, not far from this spot, was robbed and wounded. I am now a resident in the castle in the valley, appertaining to the countess of Roskelyn."

"To the countess of Roskelyn!" interrupted De Bourg with astonishment; "wonders multiply; hast thou seen her?"

"Yes; some merchants, with difficulty, after I was wounded, procured

me

me admittance; and I am now engaged in her train."

"And hast thou, degenerate boy, submitted to so menial a step? if so, thou art worthy thy fate; De Bourg and thou art henceforth strangers."

"My name and family are unknown," answered Randolph with warmth; "and proud and valiant as I know the chevalier De Bourg to be, in this case he would have been as mean as the boy Randolph."

"Good lad," replied De Bourg, softnened rather than displeased with the spirit of his reply, "excuse my impatience; I love thee too well to think thee dishonoured with calmness."

Randolph threw himself on the chevalier's neck, saying in broken accents—"I hope—I trust, my beloved father yet lives; I have great reason to suppose him a prisoner in the castle: that circumstance

alone hath made me a dependant on the house of Roskelyn, in the expectation of being ascertained whether my suspicions were true or false. Say, chevalier, would you not have done the same?"

"By my soul, in such a cause, I would be a slave to the meanest reptile God ever created; but, dear Randolph, pity my impatience, and give me an immediate account. If what thou advancest be productive of good, and we owe the blessed discovery to thee, from that hour I acknowledge thee my superior; for my search hath been vain, and, sick with vexation, I have lain three weeks in a fever within a few miles of Stirling."

"I grieve to hear it. This is the first day that I have walked forth from the castle; but let us sit down, and I will inform you of every particular."

De Bourg and his companion, leaving their horses to graze, took their places

by

by the youth, who distinctly related all that had befallen him since he left the island.

De Bourg was well pleased to find that no discovery respecting the birth of Randolph had taken place; and yet more so, that there was a probability that Monteith survived, though he was by no means so sanguine as the youth.—"However," observed he, "'tis clear that there is a prisoner, and, from the known disposition of the countess, no doubt, one unjustly oppressed; we will therefore, at all events, set him free; the chance of its being St. Clair is well worth the attempt. But now, my dear boy, let us mingle prudence with our joy; your absence may cause suspicion; return, and be carefully observant of all that passes; we will, in the mean time, examine all the outworks of the castle, for some place to enter; for we are not

strong enough to use open force, therefore must have recourse to art."

"When shall I see you again?" said Randolph.

"To-morrow morn, at the same hour; no material event can, in the mean time, take place without our knowledge; for thou wilt watch within, and I without."

Before they separated, De Bourg taking his purse—"Randolph," said he, "thou art moneyless; and, though it may be unnecessary, yet 'tis best to be provided; and rest assured, for thy perseverance and conduct through the whole of this business, though thou shouldst even be mistaken, respecting the prisoner being Monteith, yet henceforward De Bourg will forget the boy, in the man Randolph, and, as such, claim his friendship."

Little more passed ere they parted; Randolph

Randolph returning, with a light heart and a quick step, to the castle; while De Bourg and his companion conversed more fully on the discovery he had made.

CHAPTER XI.



RANDOLPH was too insignificant an object for his absence to be noticed: he therefore retired to his chamber, to collect his spirits, after the pleasurable surprise he had met with. In the course of the day, he again was admitted to the presence of the countess, who, pleased with his good mien, ordered him a suit emblazoned with the arms of Roskelyn. Randolph blushed as he heard the command given; but his confusion passed unheeded, and he was admitted to the honour of presenting her wine at dinner. —Again left to himself, he waited for the night with impatience; but all attempts were fruitless to make any discovery

covery; and, after passing many sleepless hours, he hastened to his appointment. De Bourg and his companion were already there; they informed him that they had carefully examined the outward walls of the castle, and, at no great distance from the tower had discovered a part fallen to decay, where they could easily enter, and where they would wait him at the turn of midnight. All arranged, they departed; and, as before, Randolph returned unnoticed, or at least disregarded.

In the course of the day, the innocent Jean having, by some means, incurred the displeasure of her arrogant mistress, Randolph was witness to a scene of violence and passion, of which he could before form no idea. "Good Heaven," said he, as he reflected on the subject, "is it possible that a woman, gifted with the face of an angel, should transform herself thus into a fiend? Happy, hap-

py Barra, no outrageous woman reigned there; but my angelic mother, whose voice, softer than the sweetest notes of her lute, attuned every mind, like her own, to harmony: and thou too, sweet Phillippa, lovely sister, dost thou ever think of Randolph? Oh, if thou dost, thy gentle heart, I well know, will grieve at the uncertainty of his fate!"

A thought then struck him, that, if he was successful, with the assistance of De Bourg, in liberating the prisoner, on his flight being discovered, the anger of the countess would entirely fall upon Jean, as being the primary cause of his having gained admittance into the castle. This reflection occupied his imagination a considerable time, and gave him increased vexation: to make her the companion of his flight was impossible, and to leave her to the malice of the tyrant, was a torment to his generous mind. At length, hastily adopting what he thought

thought a midway, he inclosed half the money he had received from De Bourg, and, procuring the materials for writing, addressed her thus:

"DEAR JEAN,

"You have said you considered me as a brother; accept, therefore, the inclosed, as from one that loves you befitting that name; it will serve, I trust, to convey you to your mother in safety; for I cannot endure the reflection of leaving you in the power of the haughty countess: and be assured, if I live, you shall again hear of your grateful friend,

RANDOLPH."

This task executed, he inclosed the note, with the money; and in the evening, taking Jean aside, he said—"Dear maid, I have a request to make; it is, that you

 would

would take charge of this small packet until to-morrow, when, I pray you, if I do not reclaim it, break the seal; but if you have the smallest esteem for Randolph, keep the contents secret."

Jean took the packet—"I will truly do so, if you wish it," answered she; "but why do you not rather tell me what it contains, than refer me until to-morrow?"

"For a reason which you will then know; it is on a subject on which I cannot speak."

"Surely you do not mean to leave us?"

"Question me not, dear Jean, but rest assured that your happiness will ever be near to the heart of Randolph; and that, if we now part, we shall speedily meet again."

As he spoke, he affectionately pressed her hand, and hastened away before she could reply.

Jean,

Jean, left to herself, wished anxiously to open the packet, but respected the request of Randolph too highly to deviate from her promise, and, dropping it into her bosom, with a sigh, she retired to the duties of her occupation. The appointed hour of midnight at length arrived. In silence and darkness Randolph watched from his chamber, and, as usual, saw the guards, as he judged them, pass the court, and, among them, M'Lellan. Waiting a few minutes, until he supposed they had reached the tower, he left his apartment, and followed.

The tower was at a considerable distance from the inhabited part of the castle, and Randolph had nearly reached the half-way, when, to his infinite vexation, he turned suddenly on one of the relieved guards, who was retiring to rest for the night. The man carried a torch, by the light of which, Randolph, with

amazement, recognised the features of the assassin who had wounded him, previous to his being admitted into the castle. Rage in his heart banished every other sensation, and he remembered only that one of the oppressors, or perhaps the murderer of his father, stood before him. The villain, equally astonished, first recovered his surprise—"Boy," said he arrogantly, "what doest thou here at this hour? The countess shall know of thy midnight walks."

"What doest *thou* here, villain?" replied Randolph, thrown off his guard by passion; "the countess shall to-morrow also know that her roof affords shelter to an assassin."

"Ah, ha! say you so, young master?" replied he, throwing down his torch, which flamed, upon the ground, and, drawing his sword, he made a stroke at Randolph, who, springing aside, avoided the blow, and, before the villain could again

again raise his weapon, rushed upon him, and plunged his dirk into his bosom, saying, as he gave the stroke—"Have at thee, thou false knave! 'tis the dagger of Monteith, and his son sheaths it in thy murderous heart."

Justice directed the hand of Randolph, and revenge nerved his arm with strength and resolution beyond his age; the stroke being so truly directed, that the assassin immediately fell to the earth.

Though prudence might have instigated Randolph to repeat the blow, his heart recoiled at the thought; trampling, therefore, on the torch, to prevent its leading to discovery, he took the weapon of his fallen enemy, and repaired to the aperture where De Bourg and his companion Frazer were to await him. They were already there. The emotion of the youth was not lost upon them; in few words he gave them to understand the

the cause, which they felt redoubled the danger of delay. Hastening forward, Randolph, as they had previously devised, struck on the door of the tower, while De Bourg and his companion stood silently behind the portal. M'Lellan, from within, demanded who came so late, and their business?

"Have you forgotten my voice?" answered Randolph; "my business is respecting the prisoner; know ye not that I am now in the service of the countess? Open the door."

"Marry, a young knave in office," muttered M'Lellan to his companions in a low voice. "Doth the wind sit in that quarter? the world says false, or the countess is no nun; and this sudden trust bespeaks that she hath a keen eye for a smooth face, and a well-turned leg."

"Since I have known he was in the castle," replied one of his comrades, "my

my mind hath plaguily misgiveth me; I would Barnaby had struck surer the first day we met."

"Pish! there is no danger; he is always in our power; I am convinced he hath no suspicion."

"Will you admit me, or am I to return to the countess?" said Randolph, again striking the door.

"A curse upon him, how consequential he is! but I shall let him know that I am as great a man as himself in the castle, and so he may tell his mistress," said M'Lellan. As he spoke he unbarred the gate; but, before he could either express his power or his displeasure, Randolph, followed by De Bourg and Frazer, rushed in, and hastily closed the door. Though the villains were taken by surprise, their natural ferocity did not desert them; they attacked the intruders with a spirit befitting a better cause; but in so small a chamber as that

of

of the entrance of the tower; which was not more than eight feet square, the conflict was soon decided. M'Lellan fell; and one of his companions being disabled in the arm, the third sued for mercy. De Bourg demanding the keys, which were given from under M'Lellan's garment, they left Frazer to guard below, and commanded the man who had received the least injury to lead to the apartment of the prisoner.

The fellow, entirely subdued, preceded them in sullen silence; but reaching the second story, where Randolph conjectured the prisoner to be confined, he had no longer patience, but, snatching the keys, himself opened the door, though his hand trembled with apprehension and pleasure: the first, lest it should not be the person he wished; the second, with the excess of satisfaction, occasioned by the hope of its being in reality Monteith.

The

The door, unlocked and unbolted, they entered. The prisoner had heard the conflict, and, far from suspecting the real cause, conjectured that the business for which he was detained was now to be completed, and prepared to meet his fate with fortitude. The precipitation with which they ascended the stairs, together with the hasty unlocking and unbolting the door of his chamber, confirmed this opinion: advancing, therefore, to meet them—"Agents of hell," said he aloud, "I am ready; set me free from this cursed enthralment; but be assured a day of retribution will come, when ye will dearly repay the blood of Monteith."

"Monteith! father! Monteith!" exclaimed Randolph, rushing into the chamber, and with frantic energy, clasping St. Clair's neck, "are you indeed restored to me? My dear mother and Phillippa will once more be happy."

"Gracious

"Gracious powers, Randolph! is it possible? do not my eyes deceive me? De Bourg too! and no more! is this real, or is it the wandering of my sickly fancy?"

"Dear St. Clair," replied De Bourg, "thanks be to Heaven, 'tis true substantial happiness. An hour since, I would have given my life to have realized this scene, which we owe to Randolph: but come—no time is to be lost; take this sword," presenting one he had taken from M'Lellan; "danger yet hangs over us; but we will clear it or die: Monteith is now our leader, and fear cannot assail us."

St. Clair, weakened with sorrow and suffering, leaned for a moment on the sword—"Say," answered he, "but that Ambrosine lives, and again shall you see Monteith himself; if she is lost, I can die here—there is no need of going farther."

"No,

"No, surely, not for a man who loves only himself," replied De Bourg; "but for one who considers what his friends have ventured in his cause, he will repay the debt to the uttermost. Ambrosine, a short time since, though plunged in grief for thy supposed death, survived."

"Survived!" repeated St. Clair; "how cold the word! but lead on— though enervated, I can still follow the call of honour."

So saying, he grasped his weapon, and followed De Bourg. They found M'Lellan dead, and his comrade, though faint with the loss of blood, seated on a bench, in the action of binding up his wound. Though bewildered with the variety of adventures that had passed, Randolph did not forget the villain Barnaby, whom he left bleeding in the inner court; but De Bourg would by no means consent to his desire of seeing if

any

any relief could be afforded him—"What," said he, "wouldst thou save the villain's life, to do more mischief? Fie on thee, girl-hearted Randolph! away, and leave him to his fate: better ten such dogs should perish than one honest man."

Randolph made no reply, but followed his companions, who, after securing the door of the tower on the outside, hastened to the breach in the castle-wall; which passing, they found four horses, which De Bourg had provided, and securely fastened in an adjacent thicket; these they instantly mounted, and departed full speed.

"By my life," said St. Clair, as they rode forward, "I cannot even yet think myself awake; rescued so suddenly, and by so small a force, almost exceeds belief; tell me, know ye ought of Ross? is he returned to Barra?"

"Not when we left the island," replied

plied De Bourg, "which is some weeks since. Thou lightenest my heart by the supposition that he still lives."

"Heaven forefend that he should not! But tell me truly how doth my wife—my children?"

"Thy wife and children were overwhelmed with sorrow when I last saw them; thy return will, I hope, banish their grief. Ambrosine hath left Barra, and retired to Kintail; and thus doubly have we felt thy loss."

"Let us then away thither: the first moment of liberty be hers—the next is due and shall be paid at Barra."

"Thinkest thou there is no danger of a pursuit from the house of Roskelyn? If thou dost, 'tempt it not, but retire to the island; I will be the joyful messenger to Kintail."

"There is no fear, De Bourg; thy friend St. Clair, who laughed at the attacks of men, hath been beguiled, disgraced,

graced, and foiled, by the arts of a woman.

"Pish, man! and so was Sampson; but thou art more fortunate than he, for thou hast escaped with thy strength, though thou didst fall into the power of Delilah."

"Tis too long a story to relate as we proceed, and my curiosity and impatience at least equal thine," replied St. Clair. "I think thou saidst I owed much to Randolph; how that may be, I know not, but the hour will, I trust, come, when I may pay the debt."

"Dear father," interrupted Randolph, "it is already paid a thousand-fold by seeing you in safety; what have I done more than every son owes to a parent?"

Using the utmost diligence until the morning was far advanced, they reached the dwelling of a peasant, where they procured refreshment for themselves and horses; during which interval, De Bourg related

related to Monteith all that had passed at Barra—the common distress for the loss of himself and Ross—his own journey to Edinburgh—the flight of Randolph, and its subsequent consequences, which had terminated so happily; softening only on his account the distressed state of Ambrosine.

"My dear boy," said Monteith, "truly might De Bourg declare my obligations to thee; thou hast already realized what my fondest hopes wished to see accomplished, and I scarcely regret a misfortune which has at once proved thy affection and thy valour."

"And now," said Randolph, "that you have heard my disobedience palliated, and my small merits magnified, by the partiality of De Bourg, will you not, dear father, relate to us how you fell into the hands of your enemies, and whether we may hope again to see our noble friend,

friend, sir James Ross, without which our happpiness will be incomplete?"

"Remembrance, brave boy, is yet too painful; give me a few days, and I will satisfy your curiosity in every particular. Sir James Ross, I trust to Heaven, will return safe; he is doubtless now in Denmark; but, once again united to such a phalanx of friends, 'tis not the little subtle arts of a woman, nor of her banditti combined, which shall withhold him from hearts so true, and arms so brave, as those at the fortress."

Their beasts recruited, and themselves refreshed with such food as the cottage afforded, they resumed their journey, and, travelling all day and the ensuing night, before noon on the second day they reached the neighbourhood of Kintail, where De Bourg, and also Randolph, trembling for the life of Ambrosine, entreated Monteith not to surprise

her

her by his presence hastily, but to suffer them to break the first intelligence, in some manner less hazardous to her agonized feelings.

Monteith, at the request, viewed them in silent anguish—"You have deceived me," exclaimed he; "my Ambrosine, my wife, is perhaps no more! She is, if living, superior to the feminine follies of her sex; and the sight of St. Clair, though it may surprise, cannot shock her. Ah! if she be indeed dead, what have I to do with life! the load will be too much to bear!"

"St. Clair," replied the chevalier, "though the grief of Ambrosine, when she departed for Kintail, was such as alarmed us all for her life, yet it was the sorrow befitting her general character; and blest, above the lot of men, with such a wife, shall your reason sink beneath hers? Fie on it! if she survives, she will blush to hear it. Methinks I

see her now, as she bade us farewell; her mind still possessed all its native power, and, though bent with sorrow like a reed in a storm, she remembered she had other claims on her heart than those of Monteith, and, while she clasped his children to her bosom, vowed to endeavour to bear life for their sakes."

"Angelic woman! De Bourg, condemn not my weakness, but pity me; act as thou thinkest best, but remember my impatience."

De Bourg assured him he would not forget it; and, speeding forward, they reached the avenues of the castle of Kintail, where Monteith and Frazer promised to remain, while De Bourg and Randolph went on to the mansion, to apprise Ambrosine of the welcome tidings.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XII.

"Chevalier," said Randolph, as they proceeded, "my heart fails, my legs tremble, and though blest, as I thought, to the extent of my wishes, in the recovery of my father, a secret dread hangs over me; should sorrow have undermined the life of my mother, he will never survive; and I shall be doubly an orphan."

"I am infected with the same fear," said De Bourg, "and, equally for his sake as for hers, kept him from too sudden a surprise."

Thus conversing, they reached the gate, where they were met by the old steward. Declaring to him their business

ness was with the lady of Kintail, his eyes filled with tears, and viewing them with a look of sorrow, he said—"Alas! you cannot see her; she hath no longer any earthly business."

"Dead!" exclaimed De Bourg, turning pale, while Randolph, equally alarmed, leaned against the portal for support.

"No," replied the old man, "not dead, but beyond all hope: her children weep day and night, and her domestics devote those hours they should pass in sleep to supplicate the Holy Virgin in her favour: but vain, I fear, are our prayers; life only lingers like the flame of a lamp whose oil is exhausted; calm and resigned, no complaint escapes her; but if, perchance, weary nature finds a short respite in sleep, she then calls upon her dead lord, and by her words, refers to the love she bore him living."

"Good old man, I pray ye call Bridget;

Bridget; tell her, 'tis De Bourg and Randolph that crave to see her."

The steward obeyed. At sight of the chevalier and Randolph, Bridget wept aloud and wrung her hands; but at length somewhat recovered, she informed them, that the wife of Monteith was already informed of the chevalier's journey to Edinburgh, and the subsequent flight of Randolph, by sir Alexander M'Gregor and the messenger that had been sent from Barra; that both had tarried some days at Kintail, from whence they had returned to the island, much dis-spirited at the hopeless situation of the heiress, and the uncertainty respecting the chevalier and Randolph.

Scarcely attending to what she related, they desired to be admitted to see the wife of Monteith, and, being announced, proceeded to her apartment; Bridget saying, as she led the way—"Alack, sirs, prepare yourselves for sorrow; for

ye will behold but the wreck of my dear mistress."

On entering the apartment, though prepared, they started back. On a couch, supported, was the still lovely Ambrosine, her eyes sunken, her lips vivid, and her alabaster skin alone covering the beautiful symmetry of form and feature, *that* mortal decay could only destroy. On one side knelt Phillippa, on the other James, and at her feet sat the young St. Clair.

"My dear friends," said she, "how kind ye are to come at this distressful hour! my heart ardently longed to be thus satisfied; the most anxious fears have distressed me on your account."

Without speaking, Randolph threw himself by Phillippa, and, weeping, concealed his face on the couch, while De Bourg, taking the hand of Ambrosine, was for some time equally unable to reply.

"The

"The generous motive that directed your journey, De Bourg," continued she, "and the filial one that prompted your flight, my dear Randolph, have made an impression on my heart to be effaced only by death; but, alas! I am too well aware of the inefficacy of your search, to feel the least disappointment at your want of success."

"Dear lady, take comfort; all hope is not lost."

"No," answered she smiling, "we shall meet again; I shall myself find Monteith, the husband of my love, the man alone for whom I wished to live. Ah! chevalier, blame me not; I have striven to overcome this selfish grief, but it will not be; the oak is fallen, and the weak ivy naturally sinks to the earth. You speak not, Randolph," added she after a pause; "dear boy, come near; take my blessing and my thanks, for the

affection that prompted you to seek Monteith."

Randolph raised her hand to his lips—"Beloved mother," replied he in broken accents, "it was Heaven that prompted me to seek my father."

"It was, my son; for an affectionate and grateful heart is the gift of God."

Pleasurable as were the tidings of De Bourg and Randolph, they feared to disclose them, lest the almost exhausted spirit of Ambrosine should, on the smallest exertion, take its flight, never to return.

"Lady," at lengtn said De Bourg, "we owe Randolph a debt we can never repay; his search hath been more fortunate than mine, for he hath found——"

Ambrosine started, and, hastily interrupting the chevalier, she said—"Speak, I conjure you! hath he discovered the body of St. Clair? have the

waves

waves yielded him up to my prayer? If so, our dust shall mingle; and, at the great day, when the grave shall open and disgorge its dead, our spirits shall rise together."

As she spoke, her sunken eyes sparkled, and her fragile form appeared to gain strength from the idea.—" Oh! if indeed you have been so blest," added she, " once more let me see him; nor time, nor change, fearful as death may be, can make me shrink from Monteith, the lord of my affection, the father of my children."

" Lady," replied De Bourg, " this agitation will destroy you; Monteith lives."

" Lives;" exclaimed she, wildly gazing around her; Monteith lives! De Bourg is no liar; Monteith lives! Away with these hateful sables! Monteith lives! give me my wedding garments; I will away to meet him!" As she spoke

spoke, she made an effort to rise; but nature was too far exhausted, and she sunk senseless on her pillow.

For some moments the utmost despair reigned; all thought her gone for ever; at length, slowly recovering, she apparently strove to collect herself.—"I am strangely weak," at length said she; "I dreamed that ye said Monteith still lived!"

"Dear mother," answered Randolph, "your dream will be verified."

"Verified!" repeated she, fixing her eyes strongly upon him, with fearful earnestness; "verified did you say? Observe me, Randolph—I have reached that moment when the world fades from the sight, and truth alone stands the test; answer me, therefore, as your soul shall answer its worldly transgressions, whether what you have advanced is not merely fabricated to palliate the anguish of the moment?"

"No,

"No, by my hopes of happiness, by your life, and all I hold most dear, my father lives!"

"Your father!" replied Ambrosine, her imagination again wandering from the purpose; "what is *your* father to me?"

"Dear lady, endeavour to collect yourself," said De Bourg; "by my soul and honour, *my* friend Monteith, *your* husband lives."

Ambrosine passed her hand over her forehead, and, for some minutes, appeared as if she endeavoured to gain recollection.—"Ah! doth he indeed live?" at length said she; "where then is he captive? what villainy hath beguiled his valiant heart? Oh for a strong reviving potion, that would enable me to support life till we once more meet, that I might yield my breath in his arms!"

"Monteith is no captive lady; if you

will endeavour to compose your spirits, you shall see him," said De Bourg.

Ambrosine viewed him a moment with a doubtful gaze; but her feelings were too powerful for words, and she relapsed into a state of insensibility.

"Be the consequence what it may, Monteith shall instantly be admitted," said the chevalier; "should she expire without seeing him, never should I pardon myself for this delay; stay then here Randolph—I will return with him immediately."

For some minutes after the departure of De Bourg, Ambrosine lay with every semblance of death: at length reviving, she looked round, and asked for the chevalier.—"He is gone on a welcome errand," said Randolph; "bear up, dear mother—he will speedily return; but, if you love me, endeavour to take some cordial, that may assist in supporting your spirits in this happy interview."

"Ye

"Ye have not then deceived me," said she; "Monteith is indeed among the living. Fie on this weakness! methought my heart had forgotten to beat, yet now my bosom will scarcely contain it."

Phillipa held a cup of wine to her mother.

"My child," said she, "let me receive it from Randolph; I will drink it to his health. May sorrow never assail him, and every just wish of his heart be gratified!"

In the mean time, De Bourg had joined Monteith and his companion; his features were too indicative of grief for St. Clair to hazard a question, and, judging the worst, he leaned against a tree in silent expectation.

"Monteith," said De Bourg, "come on; no time is to be lost; prepare yourself for a sight that will rend your heart;

heart; but conceal your anguish as much as possible in her presence, for the balance of life and death are so exactly poised, that a hair would turn the scale.".

"I will, my friend," replied Monteith, in a smothered voice, and with forced composure; "but you may as well bid me forget the warmth of the sun, as to tell me to be less sensible of the value of Ambrosine."

A melancholy silence took place, which neither seemed inclined to interrupt, while they passed to the castle. When the chevalier was again admitted to the lady's chamber, he found her more composed, and supported by Randolph, in eager but silent expectation. On his entrance, her strained sight appeared to look beyond him, while, clasping her hands with impatience, she cried —"He comes not! barbarous deception! am I so sunk in your opinion that you treat

treat me like a wayward child? Oh Monteith! Monteith! didst thou indeed live, who would dare to deceive me thus!"

"Life of my life, and dearer to my soul than the light of day, or the blood that warms my heart, thy husband is here," said Monteith, entering the chamber, but starting back at sight of her altered form, and stopping motionless at the foot of her couch. The name of St. Clair escaped her lips; she stretched forth her hands, and made an effort to rise, but sunk senseless into his arms.

Monteith at first thought her dead, and gave way to the anguish of his heart, while in vain Bridget and De Bourg entreated him to retire.

"Never," exclaimed he with vehemence; "we will never separate. Oh my love! my wife! may the infernal fiend that caused thy sufferings be accursed! I could forgive all but this."

Ambrosine

Ambrosine slowly revived; all remained silent; and, as a mother watches the first born of her hopes, so did Monteith hang over his idolized Ambrosine, fearful almost to breathe, lest his words should dissolve the flattering wish of once more hearing her speak.

"It is then indeed true that thou art restored to me," at length said she; "happy to see thee once more, I cannot now consider the means: but thou wilt not again forsake me?"

St. Clair supported her in his arms, her cheek reclined upon his bosom, and her eyes fixed upon his face.

Though the children of Monteith were enraptured to see their father, not one presumed to approach him, fearful of renewing the emotion of their mother. Bridget had taken the young St. Clair; James had his arms clasped about De Bourg; while Phillippa and Randolph, their hands joined, with the affection and

and innocence of their childish years, alternately embraced each other.

Though Ambrosine was apparently so much exhausted, she appeared serene and composed; and, all leaving the chamber except Monteith, Phillippa, and Bridget, she still leaning on his bosom, at length insensibly dropped asleep.

"Praised be Heaven," said Phillippa softly, "my dear mother slumbers for the first time these two days! her sleep too appears more tranquil than it hath been for many weeks."

Though Monteith was weakened by confinement and vexation, and had sustained considerable fatigue since he left the castle of the countess of Roskelyn, he supported Ambrosine without varying his posture for three hours, so fearful was he that the least motion might disturb her. On awaking, her spirits appeared more collected, and she took food;

food; but her extreme weakness left scarcely any hopes of her recovery.

De Bourg, willing to share his satisfaction with his friends, resolved to depart immediately for the island; but, Frazer requesting that commission, the chevalier remained at Kintail; and he sailed the ensuing day for Barra.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIII.



WHILE Monteith and his companions were pursuing their way to Kintail, the dwelling of the countess was a scene of dismay and confusion. The villain whom Randolph had wounded in the inner court by slow degrees recovering from the fainting which his wound at first occasioned, crept to the tower, as the nearest place to obtain assistance. From the grated window, he was informed of all that had passed, and desired to endeavour to open the door, that the survivors might be liberated. Barnaby, though sinking with loss of blood, attempted to obey, but found the task beyond his power, as De Bourg, as well as barring

barring the door, had also locked it, and taken away the keys. Thus circumstanced, there were no means left but to alarm the inmates of the castle, and Barnaby's weakness made such an exertion almost impossible; obliged, however, by necessity to make the attempt, he, with the utmost difficulty, reached the first inhabited part of the dwelling, though the effort took up a considerable time, and occasioned him the most violent agonies. The alarm given, it soon reached the countess. All the vassals knew that a prisoner was detained in the tower, his name and quality being all she wished to conceal; and from thence arose her care in not suffering his person to be seen, lest by any chance he might be recognised.

As the fangs of the enraged lion are directed against all whom he meets, so did the violence of the countess assail all within her domain. At first she could not

not credit the account; but, throwing a loose garment about her, hastened for confirmation to the tower, when, causing the doors to be broken, the sight of M'Lellan's body, and the languishing state of his companions, convinced her of the truth.

Humanity was with her a secondary object; simply, therefore, ordering Barnaby's wound to be bound up, she commanded that he should be brought back, in order that she might question them together. Dismissing her attendants to wait on the outside—"There is treachery in this case," said she. "How could a sufficient force to break into the tower enter the precincts of the castle without knowledge? how gained they admittance here? and of what number did they consist?"

"I saw but three; one of them was the youth you keep in the castle, but

who

who fought like a devil that had been nurtured in blood from his cradle."

"Three!" repeated the countess with astonishment; "three! and were ye such poltroons to be conquered by three men?"

"Poltroons!" said one of the fellows, surlily; "is the body of M'Lellan, and our wounds a proof of cowardice?"

"The boy was alone when he stabbed me within the second court," said Barnaby.

"The boy!" replied the countess; "to what boy do ye all allude?"

"Why, to him, you call Randolph, the son of the prisoner; he said, as he struck me, that the son of Monteith sheathed his dagger in my heart."

"His son! impossible! 'tis false! he hath no son of that age." Then going to the door, she called to the attendants who waited without, and ordered some of them to bring Randolph before her.

The

The vassals returned after a fruitless search, and informed her that the youth had doubtless fled, and apparently had not laid down to rest that night.

The countess stamped and gnashed her teeth with rage. "Fool that I was," exclaimed she, "to be duped by a boy, that was doubtless sent hither merely as a spy, with the fictitious tale of being wounded.

She then inquired every particular respecting the conduct of those who liberated Monteith; for, disappointed in her own views, she little regarded the sufferings of the men who had been the instruments of her injustice.

Having procured all the information she could obtain, she walked round the castle, and discovered the breach, where she had no doubt the intruders had entered, as several stones were thrown down, and the traces of horses' feet were visible on the outside.

Great

Great as was her rancour against the whole party concerned, even Monteith himself became a secondary object, in her revengeful mind, to Randolph. That he was Monteith's son, she regarded as a mere subterfuge, invented to answer some purpose in the stratagem which had caused her such vexation. As Randolph had justly guessed, Jean was the marked victim of her resentment; she accused her of being privy to all that had passed, and of fabricating the story of Randolph's wound to facilitate his entrance into the castle. Jean, with more spirit than she was wont, denied the charge, and called the domestics who had dressed the wound in Randolph's head, and several others that had seen it; and of which they gave such full testimony, that the countess could not refuse it belief—"That Randolph knew M'Lellan I am sure," said Jean, in reply to some of the interrogatories put

to

to her by the countess; "for he slept at his cottage even on the night before his coming hither; and that he suspected him to be a party concerned with those that robbed him, I also know; but no further."

Nothing tending to give the countess any satisfactory information, she at length dismissed her vassals; and, left alone, in the phrenzy of passion, rent her hair and garments, and, venting curses on Monteith and his family, vowed to pursue them to the grave. To follow her late prisoner, she considered as useless; for, being uninformed of Ambrosine's residing at Kintail, she had no doubt he had made directly to the coast, and embarked for Barra; neither was it a cause in which she chose to employ domestics, being fearful of exposing herself, as well as uncertain of the number they might have to cope withal; for, though but three appeared, she doubted

not but that a far larger body had been engaged in the conspiracy.

"Disappointed, foiled, laughed at," exclaimed she, "the scorn of the haughty Monteith, and his happy wife, whom he is now hastening to clasp in his arms, and relate to her my folly—fool, fool that I was, when in my power, not to strike a poniard through his heart! Is it for this that I forgot my rank, and became the employer of the gang of M'Lellan, himself a known villain, and the outcast vassal of my father's house? Had he not been slain, I should have judged he betrayed me; but all bespeaks that impossible, and I am the dupe of a boy!"

Thus did she vent her ineffectual rage, the venomous stings of her temper and conscience recoiling, scorpion-like, on her own heart.



JEAN,

JEAN, at the first alarm at the tower, and the reported flight of Randolph, had torn open the packet he left with her; and, though she foresaw the storm that hung over herself, heartily recommended him to the protection of the saints; and, taught prudence by the art that surrounded her, carefully concealed both the letter and the money, anxiously wishing for some means of using the latter to convey her from the service of the countess.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE health of Ambrosine for many days remained in so precarious a state, that the fears of her friends suffered no abatement. Monteith never quitted her, and the rough warrior was lost in the tender, careful, and affectionate husband; whatever his hand presented, however repugnant to her inclinations, she received; and, viewing his anxious gaze when she declined the food or cordial offered her, she struggled to swallow them even when her heart recoiled. She spoke but little, but her anxiety for Monteith was visible in every action: if she slept, his hand was clasped in hers—his garment wound about her arm, or her head reclined

clined on his bosom, as if to ascertain his presence; thus, by almost insensible degrees, her strength began to renovate, and hope to revive in the bosom of her friends. The first subject on which she expressed her wishes was, that St Clair should return to Barra, where he would be safe from the machinations of his enemies; but this he peremptorily refused—"I have nothing to fear from the state," replied he; "and it is not the power of the house of Roskelyn that can injure me, surrounded by your vassals, and so near the friendly islanders."

Ambrosine pressed the subject no farther, but was daily wishing for strength to return to the fortress—"I should there," said she, "be speedily restored; the voyage would be most salutary to me; nor will my mind be satisfied till I once more enjoy the life which the society of so many years hath endeared to me."

 Her

Her strength at length permitting her to leave her couch, Monteith would often bear her in his arms to a terrace of the castle, which fronted the sea, and where the breezes, congenial to her constitution, daily appeared to renovate the faded roses of her cheeks. Able to walk, leaning on her husband or her children, no persuasion could divert her from the desire of returning to Barra; and, some few days more being given for preparation, a vessel was provided, in which they embarked, attended by Bridget and some few domestics.

However attentive Monteith had been to his wife, the situation of sir James Ross had employed many of his hours; and, previous to his departure to Barra, consulting with De Bourg and Randolph, who found himself considered as a man, they agreed to engage a vessel to convey the two latter to Denmark, in search of sir James; Monteith giving them

them every information in his power; as, that the ship which had betrayed them was of that country, and pursued its way thither with Ross, to whom they said no evil was intended, only to keep him awhile from raising an alarm.

Elated with their former success, De Bourg and Randolph departed in high spirits, well furnished with money, and attended by William and twelve islanders, on whose courage and fidelity they could rely.

Ambrosine, on their departure, entreated them to be careful of their safety; that if Ross was in captivity, to release him at the expence of her whole fortune, were it needful—"We shall, in such a case, still possess sufficient," said she, smiling on Monteith; "for I shall feel no difficulty in sharing your property, though you have been so scrupulous in regard to mine."

The return of the family of Monteith to Barra, caused the utmost joy. The arrival of Frazer with the welcome news of Monteith's safety had delayed the departure of sir Alexander M'Gregor, who now shared in the general satisfaction. St. Clair and his wife were received as given from the dead; nor was the rejoicing confined to the fortress; for, as the news spread, the islanders for several days continued visiting them with their congratulations, all of whom were received with a courtesy that delighted them. This pleasure was still increased, at the end of ten days, by the arrival of the vessel which had taken De Bourg and Randolph in search of sir James, and which now brought him, with them, to share the common joy.

All were too happy to enter into long explanations; Ross simply informing them that, on being separated from Monteith, he was taken to Elsineur, where he

he was liberated, and left without money. After a stay of six weeks, during which he sustained some severe difficulties, he had prevailed on the captain of a trading vessel, bound to Scotland, to take him on board; that, touching at the Orkneys in their way, to his infinite surprise and satisfaction, he encountered De Bourg and Randolph, who came aboard the vessel to make inquiries concerning him, when, having fulfilled his pecuniary engagements to the captain, he joined them and returned.

Monteith did not feel more sincere joy at his own release, than he did at the return of Ross, who was informed in few words, that St. Clair owed that obligation to Randolph.

The general rejoicing somewhat subsided, and the usual tranquillity restored at the fortress, one evening as the whole family were seated in social converse, Randolph, addressing Monteith, said—

"My dear father, that, during your late absence, you were betrayed into the power of the house of Roskelyn, I well know; but the particulars I am yet to be informed of. On your first escape, and during my mother's illness, and in the absence of sir James, questions would have been impertinent; but now we are happy enough to see you seated among us, and our dear mother daily approaching nearer her accustomed health, may I beg some time that you will favour us with the relation?"

"Willingly, my dear boy; but, before I enter into the recent injuries I have received, it will be necessary to give thee a yet longer account of the injustice of that family. Thou knowest me only, Randolph, as the outlaw St. Clair; my history must elucidate the subject, and make thee a judge between the house of Roskelyn and myself. Let no prejudice in my favour influence thee,

but

but consider the subject as if I were John of Roskelyn, and he Monteith."

"I shall be vexed," said Randolph, "if my curiosity should make you recall former sorrow."

"Nay, Randolph, not so; thy conduct hath stamped thy claim to my everlasting gratitude as well as affection, and never will I forget it. Whatever may be my fate, thy days shall not pass ingloriously. Soon, my boy, shalt thou mingle in the busy scenes of the world, and, with that courage and conduct which I foresee thou wilt possess, build for thyself a fame more noble than any a long list of progenitors ever yet bestowed. Any fool, Randolph, may be born noble, but he is only truly so, whose deeds ennoble himself."

"The utmost wish of my heart, dear father, is to be worthy of you, and the partial friends that have formed me from infancy. Wherever you command, I

 will

will go with pleasure; but Barra must be the only place where choice and affection lead me."

"I believe thee, and to-morrow will begin my tale; to-night it is too late; beside, events so long past need some recollection." The discourse then reverted to other subjects, and, after having passed the evening cheerfully, they all retired to rest.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XV.



RANDOLPH'S curiosity was warmly excited; he had anxiously wished to know the particulars of the enmity between the house of Roskelyn and Monteith—an enmity that no time appeared to lessen, and that, he well knew, was the cause of his father's banishment.

St. Clair's family he had never heard mentioned, more than the name of his uncle Monteith, whom he ever spoke of with the utmost reverence and gratitude; but the name of his parents had never, to Randolph's recollection, escaped him—a circumstance which astonished him as much as the profound silence and secrecy

crecy that were ever held respecting his own mother.

After dinner the ensuing day, the whole party being assembled, St. Clair said—"I have not forgotten my promise. 'My story is well known to my companions, Ross, De Bourg, M'Gregor, and Hamilton; for alas! I involved them in my misfortunes. Sir Alexander, and some few others of our inmates, also know it; but the friendship that unites us, requires that I should be equally communicative to all. In my story, I have many follies to relate—many actions that youth and inexperience can alone excuse; and remark, Randolph, what I once thought the most severe misfortune of my life hath proved the source of all my happiness, hath rendered even banishment delightful, and made a paradise of the island of Barra."

Thus premising his relation, he began as follows:—

"The

"The earliest period of my life which my memory can trace with any precision was at Toray, in the isle of Lewes, when I was about five years old, and called St. Clair M'Crae. My father possessed a small portion of land, a comfortable cottage, and an excellent fishing-vessel, in which he occasionally traded to the coast of Scotland, the Orkneys, and even to Norway. Though his manners were rough, he was in truth an honest man. My mother was of a higher cast; she had been serving-woman to a lady of the south; and the little my father possessed had been the reward of her attentions. An only child is usually humoured and spoiled by its mother; this, however, was not my case; I was as she said, so very unlike every thing she wished, so different from the delicate children she had been accustomed to in the court and city, that she could not endure me. With my father I was more

more fortunate; he called me a sturdy dog, and his heart's pride; and, before I had seen my seventh year, I had accompanied him to Norway, and repeatedly to the coast of Scotland. My character was naturally passionate, blunt, and fearless; if offended, I did not hesitate to strike those who were my superiors in age, so that I frequently got well drubbed—a circumstance which, however, far from affecting my courage, rather acted as an incentive to increase it. Inured to cold and hardship, I knew them only by name; for I was insensible of their effects. Active as the mountain-deer, the most inaccessible heights of the rocks and hills were familiar to me; so that, by the time I had reached my twelfth year, I became a kind of leader, if I may so call it, to the lads about Toray. This distinction was not only owing to my disposition, but perhaps to the situation of my parents, who were ac-

counted

counted more affluent than any in our vicinity.

"With a chosen few of my comrades, one of our favourite diversions was hunting; and being, from my first remembrance, particularly fond of my bow, I had become a tolerable marksman; added to which, being well acquainted with the haunts of the deer, we were frequently successful, though our good fortune was usually attained with considerable labour and fatigue. These successes had gained us some celebrity, and not a little flattered our vanity.

"Returning from a trading voyage on the coast of Inverness, where I accompanied my father, we brought from thence a noble passenger, no other than the gallant chief Monteith; he had been a soldier of the cross, in the Holy Land; and, newly returned, after an absence of several years, visited his estates, seeking into the distresses of his vassals, re-

lieving

lieving the oppressed, and punishing the oppressors, according to the tenor of his oath.

"His estates in Scotland were large; in the islands, contracted; but however small, he observed, the possessors were equally entitled to justice, the distribution of which he entrusted to no hireling: sworn enemy to pomp, he travelled only with two domestics, with whom he crossed over in our vessel to Lewes.

"In this short voyage, fortune was my friend. By some means I attracted the notice of the chief, who asked me various questions, to which I answered so satisfactorily, that, before we reached home, I was no inconsiderable favourite. On our arrival, as he had no dwelling on the island, he asked if my father could accommodate him for a day or two —an honour which the good man was far from declining. This was the first instance

instance I had seen of my mother's humility, and which she now shewed by chiding my father, when alone, for his folly in undertaking to entertain such a noble guest; however, as it was already settled, she was obliged to arrange every thing as well as she could for his reception. In this business, none was more active than myself; the character of the chief for bravery had gained my admiration, and his affability had won my heart, so that I resolved to shew him how sensible I was of the honour he conferred on our dwelling.

"As we reached home in the evening, the chief, taking some slight refreshment, retired to rest, as did the whole family; but my mind was too busily employed to let me sleep soundly; rising, therefore, at early dawn, I collected my companions, and telling them the occasion, entreated their assistance to procure a deer, to entertain our noble guest.

"I happened

"I happened to be beloved enough to prevail; and, to the number of twelve, we hastened to our old haunts, where, by our cries arousing our game, we pursued it till near midday, when the deer entering a narrow defile, I drew my bow, and struck an arrow through its throat. Elated with our success, we joined to carry our burthen, and had just descended the mountains, when we were met by the chief Monteith, who had been riding round the vicinity. He halted on our approach, and asked us what we carried? when one of my comrades, not suspecting his rank, from the plainness of his habit, hastily answered —'Tis only a deer St. Clair M'Crae hath slain, to make welcome a noble guest that is at his father's dwelling.'

'Young man,' said the chief, addressing me, 'your father knew not of this enterprise; for he hath sought you this morning.'

'When

'When he sees such good cheer, he will pardon me,' answered I, bluntly.

'I trust he will,' replied he; 'there is some money too for thee: as I appear to have been the cause of thy absence, let that join with the deer in pleading for thee.'

'I did not kill it to sell,' answered I, with an emotion that did not escape him, and turning from his offered gift.

'What then?' said the chief.

'Why, to make you welcome; had it been to carry to market, I would not have taken the trouble.'

"The chief smiled—'Well then,' answered he, 'thy companions will, I hope, accept my present; thanks will be all I shall offer to thee.'

'And more than I ask; if it pleases you, I shall be satisfied.'

"We then hastened home, my comrades elated with the money, and I at least

least a foot taller, in my own opinion from the refusal to accept it.

"In the evening, my father being on board his vessel, unloading goods, and I remaining at home, the chief requested my mother to suffer me to converse with him for an hour. Proud as I was of this distinction, my mother by no means appeared to approve it; she said my rudeness would speedily disgust him; but, fearful of offending by a refusal, I was permitted to attend. Our best apartment was appropriated to his use, and he sat at a small table with a jug of wine before him; making me take a cup, he drank to my health; and, conversing on different subjects, I soon forgot the distance between us, and became as free and communicative as with my fellows. He asked me of our family, and for what profession my father designed me?

'To follow his own,' I replied; 'but

I like

I like it not; if I live to be a man, I will be a soldier, and either more than St. Clair M'Crae, or nothing.'

"To this hour I remember the look the chief gave me; it, however, had in it no severity to abash me; and asking him questions respecting battles in which he had been engaged, he informed me with a kindness that completed the satisfaction his conversation gave me.

"On the ensuing morning, with my comrades, I again went to hunt. The chief, willing to witness our dexterity, followed on horseback; and, leaving his beast at the bottom of the mountain, accompanied us on foot. Though not sufficiently active to keep up with us, for he was near fifty, he, from a height, witnessed the sport. Fortune again stood my friend, and I struck a doe; but my arrow had scarcely fixed, and we had secured our prey, when I sorely repented my skill; for out of one of the hollows

of

of a dell leaped a young fawn, who fearlessly approached its wounded dam. The moment before, my utmost ambition had been to shew my dexterity to the chief, but the sight of the fawn drove him clear from my thoughts; I drew the arrow from the wound, but in vain—the stroke had been too sure, and the animal's limbs already trembled with the last pang of nature. I snatched up the fawn; my companions carried the doe, and we quitted the mountain. The chief had reached the valley as soon as ourselves.—'You draw the bow bravely, St. Clair,' said he, addressing me; 'hereafter, in such skilful hands, it may prove a tremendous weapon against the enemies of your country.'

'I will never more draw it against a deer,' replied I; 'see if I have not slain the mother of this poor beast; I had rather been without venison to the day of my death.'

'You

'You must adopt the orphan,' answered the chief; 'feed it with milk—it will do well.'

'Ay, If I could procure it; but my mother will not give it me; she boxed my ears for giving a bowl the other day to Donald Scragie, and, worse than that, hath locked the buttery door ever since.'

"The chief laughed.—'Hadst thou said he, 'rather have thy ears boxed than the buttery door locked?'

'Marry had I; for women's blows break no bones; and as my father says, they are no disgrace; for lap-dogs will bark at lions: fastening the buttery door is of much worse consequence; for, let who will want, I cannot now give them a sup.'

'Well then,' replied he, 'I must adopt the orphan myself; come on—we will devise means hereafter.'

'The same day, after dinner, I attended

tended the chief in a long walk; and, meeting a herdsman, he bought a cow, which he gave me for any use I chose to appropriate it.

"After a stay of some days, the chief, who meant to visit some of the adjacent isles, prepared to depart; and, to my great delight, requested my parents to suffer me to attend him, saying, he would bring me home on his return. This request it was impossible to refuse to a man of his rank, though I could not but perceive it was by no means agreeable to my parents; however, of that I thought but little, and departed, with a joyful heart, with my new protector.

"During this journey an event happened that conduced to strengthen the friendship the good man had already conceived for me: a wound he had received some years before, which had been improperly healed, broke afresh; and, for a considerable time, bore a very alarming

alarming appearance, so that it obliged us to leave the islands, and cross to Scotland for advice. I watched him during the whole progress, and will truly confess, from affection; so that when, in performance of his promise, he spoke of returning me to my father, I entreated with the utmost earnestness to be only suffered to remain till he was well. Yielding to my request, he sent a messenger with an excuse, and we continued our way to his paternal estate in Perthshire.

"The chief Monteith was an only son; but his father marrying some years after the death of his mother, a daughter near twenty years younger than himself was the fruit of this second union. After being many years in the service of his country, he went to Spain, from whence he embarked for the Holy Land; and, after a stay of some years, returned to his native land, where he found his

parents dead, and his only sister Mariam wedded to the earl of Roskelyn (father to the present earl), and mother to a promising lad of ten years old.

"The chief was a bachelor, and his estate entirely at his own disposal; the lady Roskelyn therefore, who, from his partiality to her, and their near affinity of blood, judged herself the indubitable heir, paid him particular attention.

"His wound had rendered him incapable of riding; he therefore travelled slowly in a horse litter, while I rode by his side. You may more easily judge, than I describe, my feelings at the first sight of the grandeur and extent of the castle of Monteith: situated on the steep ascent of a mountain, it is embosomed in woods, and, strong as the rock on which it is founded, appears to defy the efforts of force or time. A winding avenue leads to the mansion, at the extremity of which, a moat, with a draw-bridge,

bridge, and massy iron gates, secure the entrance, on the top of which last stands the brazen eagle, the ancient device of the house. In the valley beneath the castle is a religious house, built and endowed by Monteith's mother for twelve fathers, who, informed of our arrival, came out at the head of some hundreds of the vassals, to meet and welcome their chief. The good man stopped the litter and spoke to all within his reach, but most particularly noticed an aged man, whose white beard reached to his middle, and whom I afterward understood was a native of Sunderland, and said to be possessed of the gift of second sight. Many years before he had been steward to the household; but, for the last ten, incapable of business, had ceased from care, and lived at ease in the castle. His appearance and age commanded respect, and the chief not only addressed him,

but shook him by the hand. The old man's eyes sparkled with affection and gratitude, and he walked by the side of the litter till we reached the dwelling.

"A few days quiet and proper attendance, tended greatly to the restoration of Monteith. I had been his assiduous nurse during his illness; and, as noble minds are ever grateful, such was his attachment to me, that I was continually suffered to remain in his chamber, where he would laugh at my blunt sallies, and by his freedom encourage them.

"We had been about fourteen days at the castle, when the earl and countess of Roskelyn arrived; for, apprised of the chief's illness, they resolved not to fail in that attention which avarice prompted. His reception of them was such as a good heart and unsuspecting mind suggested, and to their young son John he paid particular attention, though to

his father he complained of the effeminacy of his manners, and the want of care in his education.

"As the chief was sufficiently recovered to dine in the hall, to shew honour to the noble guests, many more vassals than were accustomed to attend, waited on the board. On these select occasions the venerable steward Andrew never failed to fulfil his old duty of presenting the cup to his master, and which to have refused him, as the chief observed, would have been such an affront to his years, as he would neither commit nor countenance.

"On the day of their arrival the dinner had passed with apparent satisfaction and hilarity on all parts. I stood among the vassals, without being commanded, or offering to serve the guests, when the chief, beckoning me, said—'My good lad, give me a cup of wine; the lady Roskelyn must honour the oldest vassal

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of her father's house, the worthy Andrew, with receiving one from him.

"I hastened to fulfil the command given; Andrew, at the same time, with his tremulous hand, presented a goblet to the countess, who gave, as pledge—'*Prosperity and never-fading honour to the house of Monteith!*'

"The high roof of the hall re-echoed with the acclamations of the vassals, the minstrels prepared to play, and the chief, with a smile of satisfaction, thanked his sister, when, on a sudden, the mirth was changed to alarm, by the ancient Andrew's falling on the marble pavement, his palsied limbs shaking with convulsions, and his features distorted with agony.

'The Virgin and holy saints direct us!' exclaimed the vassals, dropping on their knees; 'the spirit is upon him; touch him not.'

'Give him air—crowd not around him,

him,' said the chief; 'tis doubtless one of those paroxysms to which aforetime he hath, as I have heard, been accustomed. Seat him on a chair; nay, I will have it so; his aged limbs will be bruised against the pavement.'

"The chief was immediately obeyed. —For some moments the old man continued to struggle, when, on a sudden, he became placid, his glazed eyes fixed on his master, to whose chair I had clung from fear, and rising as it were above the weakness of age, his voice became loud and sonorous; and such was the impression I received from his words, that never shall I forget them.

'*The beasts of the field and the wolves of the mountain nourish and suckle their young; the birds of the air feed their brood, and shelter them under their wings; but a wanton woman casteth forth her children, even as the summer flies do their eggs in shambles!*'

"The

"The old man ceased, his eyes closed, and neither breath nor motion betokened life.

'Out upon the hypocritical defamer of women!' exclaimed the countess, though she trembled as she spoke; 'let him be conveyed to his chamber, and utter his falsehoods at leisure, so they pollute not our ears!'

'Sister,' replied the chief, with marked severity, 'the oldest vassal of your father's house, did not even his age amount to fourscore and eight years, deserves more charity. If, indeed, Heaven speaks through these inspired men, all we can do is to listen with reverence.'

"The lady Roskelyn made no reply, but, by the crimson of her cheek, shewed the conflict of passions that raged within her bosom.

"Again the old man's breast heaved, and again his eyes opened, and fixing

as

as before upon the chief, he continued —*'See the hand of Heaven! it points the way; it mocks at the cunning of man; vice shall live in fear, and right and truth prevail. The master hath his own; but alack! alack! with what an unthrifty hand he spreads his store! and ingratitude and avarice shall again triumph; till the red mane shall bite the ground under the feet of the willing captive!*

"The aged Andrew again ceased; an awful silence reigned throughout the hall, when, after a long pause, he again started, and broke into speech—*'Hark! the sound of pleasure re-echoes through the halls of Monteith! the minstrels sing to the sound of the bagpipe, the harp, and the clarishoe! Widows and orphans weep with joy! Universal gladness reigns, and deadly foes quaff wine from the same friendly goblet!'*"

"Old

"Old Andrew ceased, and in a few minutes his features sunk into their usual state; but, like a man suddenly awakened from sleep, he gazed around him with a vacuity that shewed his recollection of worldly objects was not returned: feeble as an infant, his limbs refused their office, and he was at length removed with care and tenderness to his chamber.

"For the first part of the prophecy, I cannot but think it hath been verified in myself; but, for the latter part, it is involved in darkness, and, no doubt, if ever it comes to pass, not in my days, but, if reserved to my children, more welcome than to myself.

"For some time after Andrew had been carried out and the vassals withdrawn, all continued silent. The chief had ordered me to remain, and, considering me as a boy to whom no heed need be paid, spoke freely before me.—

'Sister,'

'Sister,' said he, addressing the countess, 'what think you now of old Andrew? If he feigns, in faith, he acts with such an exact similitude to nature, that he hath caused an emotion within my bosom, that neither the enemies of my country, nor the foes of the blessed cross, ever yet had to boast; for I even yet tremble, and the big drops of sweat fall from my brow.'

"The earl of Roskelyn made no reply, but appeared lost in thought.

"The countess answered—'You may think as you list, but many of these men are imposters.'

'It may be so; but think you those convulsions, that nearly shake life from her seat, are to be feigned? or, even were they, what advantage could Andrew reap from such hypocrisy? No Mariam, the faithful vassal of your father's house, from his infancy, never hath dishonour or disgrace been laid to his

his charge. That this prophetic dream alludes to our family, I have no doubt; but, as I never injured man, I cannot fear; and Heaven's decree be fulfilled! What appears to have angered you, sister,' added he with a good-humoured smile, 'is that there was some reflection upon women; but what is that to you? the honour of the daughter of Monteith is untarnished; and for your children, should I judge from John, he runs no risk but from indulgence.'

"Lady Roskelyn was either unable to reply, or restrained her words; but the varying colours of her face were such as, to a more careful observer than the chief, might have declared her guilty of some action which the words of the old man had nearly touched.

'Nay, sister, you consider this matter too deeply,' resumed he, 'which to me is a plain proof that you do not think it deception. If evil doth hang over our house,

house, at least remember, by the prediction, it is to terminate happily. I am too old to wed, Mariam, and the fortunes of the family will most probably rest in your children; on whom, I say, as I would were they my own, let punishment fall, if they deserve it.'

'Dear brother,' replied the countess, in some measure endeavouring to recover her spirits, 'I perhaps judged Andrew harshly; for, never before witnessing such an event, it startled me.'

"More discourse passed on the subject, and before the evening the usual hilarity prevailed. The chief desired me to see Andrew.—'My good lad,' said he, 'thou to me hast been a tender keeper; look in, I pray thee, on my old friend, and, though thou shouldst not be so successful as with myself, thou hast a monitor within that will repay thy attention.'

"My own inclination seconding the chief's

chief's request, I hastened to the chamber of the old man, whom I found in a sound and quiet sleep, and attended by two of the vassals.

END OF VOL. II.

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